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**Achievement of Nepalese pupils in Hong Kong primary
schools:**

Barriers and education needs

Yuen Chun Ni Jennie

**A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the
requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education**

May 2007

Abstract

People of Nepalese origin are a small ethnic group in Hong Kong. As Hong Kong citizens, they are entitled to equality of opportunity and right of access to public services including education. However, it is frequently reported that the Nepalese and other minority ethnic groups encounter many difficulties in their interaction with the local education system.

This study is a two-case case study that investigates Nepalese pupils' learning in two aided primary schools, which includes their performance in relation to other pupils, their barriers to achievement, their education needs, and effective practices employed by the schools to support them. The method of investigation is through interviews of three groups of respondents: the headteachers/teachers, pupils, and parents. The interviews were conducted in the second half of the 2004-05 school year.

It is discovered that the pupils' achievement is influenced by factors that range from the personal and family to values of the government as well as international politics. I attempted to trace the changes of the Government's minority ethnic policy in recent years, and the possible reasons behind them. It is also discovered that the Government defines equality of opportunity at the levels of equal treatment, equal access and participation, rather than at a higher level of 'equal share' or 'outcome'.

Although language (Chinese) is commonly considered to be the pupils' major barrier to achievement, there are other major barriers that may include lack of family support and lack of an appropriate curriculum. A key issue identified is the lack of data to assess and monitor their achievement. Based on the findings, recommendations are made to the schools, the teacher training institutes and the Education and Manpower Bureau for the improvement of the quality of education for the minority ethnic pupils in Hong Kong.

Dedication and acknowledgements

This study is not the work of one person. It would not have been possible without the help of many advisors. I particularly would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Leon Tikly, whose patience and diligence and whose expertise in my field has been invaluable. Professor Tikly was especially supportive and encouraging at times when I was weak and uncertain.

I also would like to thank the headteachers of the two schools who consented to participate in this study. They have given me indispensable help and through their generosity I have been able to deepen my learning and share it with colleagues and readers. The headteachers, teachers, parents and pupils whom I cannot name here have been generous to share with me their experience, their hopes, and their difficulties. The headteachers and teachers have shared with me the strategies they have developed to support the Nepalese pupils. And the two minority ethnic teaching assistants have been especially helpful in the data collection process.

The parents have been so kind to participate in this study. The pupils have been so trusting, so intelligent, and they are so deserving! I would like to dedicate this study to them and I hope with all my heart that they will persevere and succeed against all the barriers that they may encounter.

Preparing for and writing this study has been a wonderful and pleasant learning experience. I feel privileged to be the investigator.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr Tim Hill who had the discernment to suggest that my previous topic was not good enough.

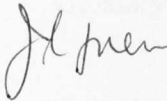
Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The thesis has not been presented to any other University for examination in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed:



Date: 31st May 2007

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CDC	Curriculum Development Council, EMB
CDI	Curriculum Development Institute, EMB
CMI	Chinese as the medium of instruction
DSS	Direct Subsidy Scheme
EC	Education Commission, Hong Kong SAR
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau (Education Department before 2002)
EMI	English as the medium of instruction
ESF	English Schools Foundation
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission, Hong Kong SAR
HKAT	Hong Kong Attainment Test
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
NAC	Newly Arrived Children (include 3 groups: children newly arrived from Mainland China, non-Chinese speaking children and returnee children)
NCS	Non-Chinese Speaking
NGOs	Non-government organizations
POA	Primary One Admission (system)

Pre-S1 HKAT Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test

QAD	Quality Assurance Division
SEN	Special education needs
TOC	Target Oriented Curriculum
TSA	Territory-wide System Assessment

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

People of Nepalese origin make up a small ethnic group in Hong Kong. Due to historical reasons, many Nepalese and their dependants are Hong Kong citizens and have right of abode in the territory. As Hong Kong citizens, they are entitled to equality of opportunity and right of access to public services including education.

According to the 2001 Population Census (Census & Statistics Dept. HKSAR 2001a, 2001b), there were only 12,564 Nepalese (0.2% of the total population) residing in Hong Kong. On the one hand, it is possible that their small number has caused them to be invisible and has placed them in a powerless position deprived of opportunities. On the other hand, the government's minority ethnic policy and public services may not have been able to catch up with the actual increase of the Nepalese population. In June 2003, the government estimated that the Nepalese population had risen to 17,215, which is a 35% increase in two years¹ (Government of the HKSAR 2005). For example, among the 19 pupils who were selected by random sampling to participate in this study, 16 of them had arrived in Hong Kong for less than four years and were not included in the 2001 Population Census.

Traditionally, children of the expatriate communities have attended international schools and stayed out of the public education system. Nepalese children born in the barracks in Hong Kong were sent back to Nepal for education. So, the local education system had no experience of catering for the non-Chinese children (Heung 2006). In the 1990s, some Nepalese children began to come to Hong Kong. Because they are usually from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Census & Statistics Dept. HKSAR 2001b), their parents cannot afford to send them to private or international schools and need to rely on public education. According to some local studies (e.g. YMMSS 2000; Loper

¹ According to the respondents of this study, this rapid increase is partly due to the political unrest in Nepal, and partly due to the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong, as the Nepalese were worried that the new government might change their immigrant policy in the future.

2001), they are discriminated against and encounter immense difficulties during their interaction with the local education system.

Some years ago I joined a school in a deprived area of Hong Kong in which about a quarter of the pupil population came from different ethnic backgrounds, another quarter were newly arrived children from mainland China, and the rest were local Chinese children. The non-Chinese pupils were Filipinos, Indians, Thais, Nepalese and from mixed nationality backgrounds. It was a time when the public education system was not formally open to the minority ethnic pupils, and there was no minimum requirement of pupil number in primary one². There were no government funded induction programmes for the minority ethnic pupils. The local parents were concerned that the non-Chinese children were attending *their* school and using the resources that should be used on their children. The teachers were not enthusiastic about supporting the non-Chinese children either. As one teacher put it to me in a comforting tone, 'Do not worry about these children. They will get frustrated enough and by the end of the year, most would have left.'

The children were going through what were potentially their best learning years and were entitled to the same education opportunities as every other child in the territory. It is unethical to allow them to be frustrated enough to leave the school. Besides, their parents might not have the resources to send them to another school farther away. So, with the help of some teachers, we put together some supportive mechanisms for the non-Chinese children. It was not easy because we had no experience or relevant training. The children were from different ethnic backgrounds, and their parents had a variety of expectations. Although we took care to provide the Chinese children with parallel support, there was a great deal of opposition from the Chinese parents and the school managers who were not educators. The officials at the Education Department (renamed EMB in 2002) were

² Beginning from September 2003, an aided primary school that fails to enroll a minimum of 23 pupils in primary one will not be eligible to operate primary one from the year onwards. The government will cease to subsidize the school in 3 years, when it will be closed. A total of 78 aided primary schools were closed between 2001/02-2006/07 mainly as a consequence of this policy (Li 2006c). At the same time, the student number continues to decline. For example, the pupil number in primary one has decreased by 3,000 in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05 (Li 2006b; Press Release 2005).

flooded with complaints. Instead of supporting our work, I was instructed not to cause trouble.

Since September 2004, minority ethnic pupils can choose to apply to any primary school and are not limited to the few government and aided schools that traditionally admit them. Consequently, many government and aided primary schools have, for the first time, admit minority ethnic pupils. As the system is now open to these children and more schools are admitting them, I believe it is time to find out if their situation has improved over these years. Chinese was perceived to be the major barrier to the minority ethnic pupils' achievement in those days. How do the schools help their pupils overcome this and other barriers? Or is our system still failing these groups of pupils? And, how can we as educators, help them better?

1.2 Rationale and significance

Much of the research on minority ethnic children's academic achievement is based on English-speaking education systems. Few studies have set out to identify the education needs of minority children in a Chinese-speaking system. Research on minority ethnic children in Hong Kong is relatively recent and there is only a small amount when compared with other countries, such as the U.K. Most local research focuses on pupils in secondary schools (e.g. Ku et al. 2005; YMMSS 2002) as they are more able to express themselves than those in primary. There are many gaps in our knowledge in the area, and among them, the pupils' interaction with primary education is especially under-studied.

Aided schools are chosen as the focus of this study for two reasons. First, they are the biggest group³ in the primary school system, and they are the schools the minority ethnic pupils most likely will be attending. Second, aided schools depend on government funding and their administrative structures are similar to a certain extent. Research

³ Number of primary schools by sector in 2005/06: Government, 39; Aided, 570; Direct Subsidy Scheme, 14; Local Private, 51; International, 46; All Sectors, 720 (Li 2006a). Parents do not have to pay school fees for aided and government schools.

findings from the case-study schools may provide useful information for different stakeholders to devise strategies to better support these children.

Minority ethnic children in Hong Kong and in other parts of the world are not a homogenous group. They have diverse learning needs, and tremendous inter- and within-group differences (Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Meece & Kurtz-Costes 2001; Ramirez & Carpenter 2005). A study of this size has to focus on one group, and pupils of Nepalese origin are chosen. It is also recognized that there exists diversity within group differences which cannot be dealt with in the present study. Nepalese children are chosen as the focus group of this study because:

- (a) They may have more barriers to achievement in school than some other ethnic groups (e.g. those whose first language is English) because they are learning both English and Chinese as additional languages, of which they need to acquire a considerable level of competence in order to learn other subjects through them.
- (b) Most of those residing in Hong Kong are permanent Hong Kong citizens, and are entitled to equal rights and opportunities as the average local citizens.
- (c) The Nepalese population residing in Hong Kong is small and the community has little voice or power in society. Consequently, they can be easily ignored. In a democratic society, minorities should be able to enjoy equality of opportunity similar to the majority.
- (d) Little has improved over their education opportunity since concern about the education of Nepalese children was first raised at the Legislative Council in 2000 (Legislative Council Secretariat 2006; Li 2000a). There are frequent reports that they are discriminated and denied of access to schools (e.g. Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; Unison Hong Kong online) despite the practice of compulsory education in the territory⁴.

⁴ All eligible children between the ages of 6 to 15 are entitled to compulsory and free education in Hong Kong.

- (e) As Hong Kong citizens, many Nepalese children will stay in Hong Kong when they grow up. The education they receive should prepare them well in order to find a job and integrate into society when they leave school.

According to the 2001 Census (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001b), a majority of the Nepalese population are from low socio-economic backgrounds. Social class is known to be strongly associated with differences in achievement (Gillborn 1998; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Meece & Kurtz-Costes 2001). Ethnicity and socio-economic background are factors that interact in people's lives and affect their life chances (Lee 2002; Ramsey & Williams 2003).

Research has suggested that primary schooling is an important stage in determining pupils' literacy and numeracy performance (Thomas et al. 2001). Immature dropouts in secondary school are often found to associate with pupils who fell substantially behind in primary school (Hustinx 2002). A solid primary education would provide the Nepalese pupils with the foundation to succeed in secondary education, which would enable them to obtain the formal qualification that is essential for career and further education, and hopefully to improve their socio-economic circumstance.

1.3 Aims and research questions

This research aims to investigate the education of Nepalese pupils as one of the minority ethnic groups in Hong Kong, to identify their education needs, possible barriers to achievement, and school strategies that are considered effective in raising their achievement. The researcher's past experience and findings from local literature (e.g. YMMSS 2000; Loper 2001) all point to the Chinese language as their biggest barrier to achievement. This remains to be confirmed by the findings. The main questions that this study seeks to answer are:

- (a) How well are the pupils of Nepalese origin performing in the case study schools relative to the performance of other pupils?
- (b) What are the barriers to achievement of this group of pupils, if any?
- (c) What are their education needs?
- (d) What examples of good practice exist in the case study schools for raising the achievement of pupils of Nepalese origin and for meeting their education needs?

Achievement is variously defined (see *Section 2.3* for further discussion). For the purpose of this study, achievement includes the pupils' performance in language and mathematics, learning attitude, and 'catching up' with the local curriculum or 'ability' to learn with the local children. Although language and mathematics performance is a narrow definition of achievement, it is important to the pupils and the schools. They are the criteria that the schools are judged against and the admission criteria to secondary schools.

Very few societies officially collect data of minorities in relation to their access and equity in education (Lee 2002). And in Hong Kong, the EMB does not collect pupils' achievement data by ethnicity, gender or age; and there are no school achievement data available to the public. So, there is no official statistics to substantiate the Nepalese pupils' achievement in this study, or compare their performance with other ethnic groups. Therefore, it is only possible to report and discuss their achievement through general perception of the respondents. Despite the positive reports of the respondents, different sources of information and findings from this study suggest the Nepalese pupils are underachieving.

Various issues that may affect their achievement are explored, such as discrimination in school. High expectation improves learning and achievement (OFSTED 2002b). What kinds of expectations do the pupils, their parents, and their teachers have of their learning? Does the families' immigrant minority status (Gibson 1991; Gibson & Ogbu 1991) influence their approach to education, which may in turn affect the children's motivation? How do the children perceive of their Nepalese identity and as Hong Kong citizens?

Which type of school arrangement is the most suitable to support the learning of these pupils? Are there any institutional barriers to their achievement? Do the children have equal access to the curriculum (Gillborn and Youdell 2000)? Is the support from the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) adequate and which areas need further improvement? It will be argued that the realization of a higher level of equality of opportunity (see *Section 3.2*) for Nepalese pupils and pupils from other minority ethnic groups should be a long term commitment of the EMB.

The Nepalese are a small ethnic group in Hong Kong. They are rarely consulted on education or other social issues that concern them. We have heard a lot from the government, the social workers, and the schools tell us what their children lack and need. The pupils are the people 'most affected by school policies and practices, but they tend to be the least consulted' (Nieto 2004: 179). Their views can have important implications on the curriculum and teachers' pedagogy. It is time we stop imposing our will on them and hear the pupils and parents tell us what they think and need.

Many people in Hong Kong do not necessarily come across the Nepalese or other minority ethnic groups in their everyday life. Although it is the duty of teachers, schools, education officials, and people of power to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve to their potential, many schools still refuse to admit these pupils⁵. Through this study, I hope to raise the awareness of the teachers and the schools that the Nepalese pupils as well as other minorities deserve equality of opportunity in education and in other facets of life. As the first step, teachers and parents should reflect on their personal values and teach our children to accept people who are different.

⁵ Teachers and parents in this study have confirmed that many schools refuse to accept minority ethnic pupils.

1.4 Method of study

This research is a ‘two-case’ case study (Yin 2003) on two aided primary schools that admit a significant number of minority ethnic pupils. The main method of data collection is through semi-structured interviews of three groups of respondents in the two schools: the schools, which include the headteachers and teachers, the pupils, and the parents. Other forms of data collection include official government documents, information from school websites, published materials, and others.

The schools are not chosen for comparison but to provide knowledge about the education of Nepalese pupils in different school settings and contexts. The size of the two schools differs significantly, with 72 pupils in one school and over 700 in the other. The headteachers and teachers are Chinese. Both schools follow a Chinese curriculum and started admitting minority ethnic pupils in the summer of 2002 due to falling pupil numbers.

Both schools were visited for two full days in the second term of 2004/05. During the two days, two headteachers, a total of 19 pupils, 11 teachers and teaching assistants, and 12 parents/guardian participated in the interviews (see *Appendix Two* for more details on the participants). 3 sets of semi-structured questionnaires were used as framework to guide the interview (see *Appendix One*).

1.5 Description of the chapters

This research was initially planned to investigate the Nepalese pupils’ learning in the two case study schools. However, it was soon discovered that the pupils’ learning does not exist in a vacuum. It exists within a macro context that includes government policy, political maneuver and international agenda. To leave everything at the school door reflects an incomplete picture. It is for this reason that a detailed macro background is provided in Chapter two. Chapter two also explains some related terminology, provides

the background information of the Nepalese population in Hong Kong, and information concerning the EMB's tentative measurement of achievement at the territory level. Drawing from different sources of information, I will identify the changes to the government's policy towards the minority ethnic pupils and the reasons for the change since 2004.

The literature review comes in Chapter three. Local and international literature on equality of opportunity, minority ethnic pupils' common barriers to achievement, and literature on the learning of Chinese are covered in this chapter. The literature informs the framework of the questionnaires. Chapter four explains the methodology of the study, and other related issues that include the various decisions made and difficulties encountered in the research process. The ethical concerns and strategies to address them are also explained.

Chapter five discusses the findings from the interviews on the Nepalese pupils' barriers to achievement and education needs. Response from the three groups of respondents is juxtaposed where appropriate. In general the pupils seem to be the most positive among the three groups. Chapter six explains the schools' strategies that facilitate the admission and raise the achievement of the minority ethnic pupils, as well as the schools' relationship with the parents. Finally, in Chapter seven, based on the research findings, I make recommendations to the schools, the EMB, and the teacher training institutes, as well as propose some areas for further study.

Chapter 2 Background to the study

2.1 Introduction

This section provides the background information of the study. It defines the terminology, explores the definition of achievement, provides information on the focus group, the territory-wide assessments, achievement of minority ethnic pupils, the education system, the education services for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) children, and recent changes in government policy in relation to minority education.

2.2 Terminology and the different ethnic groups in Hong Kong

'Race' and ethnicity

'Race' and ethnicity is an inseparable component embedded in this study. "'Race' as a concept based upon notions of biological difference, and ethnicity as connoting cultural difference and kinship, have taken on particular, interdependent and plural meanings throughout history' (Gunaratnam 2003: 8). According to the proposed Race Discrimination Bill (HAB 2006: C963) 'race' in relation to a person, means the race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin of the person. The meaning of the two words often intersects. For example, 'discrimination' of particular groups is considered 'racial' to mean discrimination for the sake of their physical appearance, such as skin colour; but in real life, the connotation usually extends to include cultural characteristics, like the food one eats. In Chinese, the meaning of 'race' and ethnicity overlaps and the two words are not easily distinguished.

The words 'race' and 'ethnicity' are both used in this study. The meaning and use of the two words are not always interchangeable. In general 'ethnicity' is used to denote groups or peoples from similar cultural background, for example, the South Asians; and at the same time, it is recognized that they are a diverse group, coming from a range of racial,

cultural, linguistic, geographic, and social class backgrounds. For example, Cantonese is spoken by people in and from a small region in the south-eastern part of China. Cantonese-speaking Chinese is composed of peoples of different racial and cultural backgrounds.

'Minority ethnic' pupils and 'ethnic minorities'

The terms 'minority ethnic', 'ethnic minority' and 'minorities' are used in the literature from different countries. They are used interchangeably in this study although they are not entirely synonymous. The use of the term 'minority ethnic' is intended to recognize that everyone has an ethnicity and belongs to an ethnic group as applied in the school context (DfES 2005b). As 'ethnic minority' seems to suggest that only minority groups have any 'ethnicity' (Powney et al. 1998) and imply a more limited and less inclusive meaning (DfES 2005b), 'minority ethnic' is the preferred term in this study.

'Ethnic minorities' is the term used by various government departments and non-government organizations (NGOs) in Hong Kong (e.g. Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001a, 2001b; EMB 2006; YMMSS 2000). Ethnic minorities may include Caucasians who are English-speaking (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001b) but are more often used to refer to South Asians (EOC 2001; Government of the HKSAR 2003; Ku et al. 2005; Li 2005b; Loper 2001; YMMSS 2000, 2002). 'As far as EMB is concerned, children of ethnic minorities generally refer to South Asian (mainly Indian/Pakistani/Nepalese) children who are residing in Hong Kong' (Legislative Council Secretariat 2006: paragraph 2).

In a television interview, regarding the lack of school places in international schools and schools under the English Schools Foundation (ESF), Ms B. Linn, Deputy Secretary for EMB, explained that the ethnic minorities had always attended government and aided schools, not international schools or ESF schools (Linn 2005). Ms Linn appears to distinguish the children from international communities and English-speaking communities not as ethnic minorities, and has associated ethnic minorities exclusively

with South Asians and Southeast Asians. The EMB's classification reflects the ethnic grouping commonly adopted by NGOs and in Hong Kong society (e.g. Chan 2005a, 2005b; Hong Kong Christian Service 2006), instead of adopting the grouping of 2001 Population Census: Thematic Report – Ethnic Minorities (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001b). As Gillborn (1990) suggests, the notion of 'ethnic minority' usually implies minority status in numerical terms as well as in power terms. Notwithstanding their number, the international communities and English-speaking communities are not considered ethnic minorities in society. They are 'expatriates' (Government of the HKSAR 2003, 2005).

Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Children and Newly Arrived Children (NAC) in Hong Kong

Minority ethnic children or South Asian children are also known as non-Chinese speaking children and 'foreign ethnic' pupils in Hong Kong. The EMB groups 'Children Newly Arrived from the Mainland' (Mainland refers to the People's Republic of China), 'Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Children' and 'Returnee Children' under the category of 'Newly Arrived Children' (NAC). NCS children are children whose mother tongue is not Chinese and do not possess the necessary level of Chinese for everyday communication. Chinese as a language is used to refer to Cantonese in this study unless specified (see *Chapter 3* for further discussion). Schools usually refer to the children as NCS or 'foreign ethnic' pupils. Many NCS children were born and are brought up in Hong Kong. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to group the NCS pupils under the category of NAC. However, this arrangement enables them to be eligible for the funding and support programmes for NAC.

Returnee Children are usually Chinese children. They have returned to Hong Kong from another country and have not studied in Hong Kong for the past three years. Returnee children usually cannot use Chinese for communication, and require similar education support, especially in terms of language support as NCS children.

Most children from the Mainland can speak Putonghua (also known as Mandarin), the national Chinese language, but unless they come from regions near the Guangzhou province, cannot speak Cantonese, and many have not learnt English. From the government's point of view, 'new arrivals from the Mainland, per se, do not constitute a racial or ethnic group in Hong Kong' (HAB 2004: paragraph 25).

Who are the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, and what is the background of the Nepalese as a group?

'Ethnicity' was a new topic of the 2001 Population Census (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001a). Thus no relevant data of past censuses/by-censuses are available for comparison. It was recognized that the number of minorities had been growing rapidly in recent years, and the Thematic Report – Ethnic Minorities (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001b) was published with the 2001 Population Census. At the time of the collection of the 2001 census, there were about 343,950 non-Chinese people residing in Hong Kong, which was 5.1% of the whole population (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001a, 2001b). They consisted of South Asians, such as Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese; Asians, such as Korean and Japanese; Southeast Asians, such as Thais and Filipinos; European and British; American and Canadian; Australian and New Zealander, and Others. The largest group of non-Chinese was 'Others' (0.9% of the whole population) which included people from mixed nationalities origin. There were about 38,048 minority ethnic children aged 0-14.

The ethnicity of the principal non-Chinese was as follows (Census & Statistics Dept., HK SAR 2001a: 43):

<u>Ethnicity of Non-Chinese</u>	<u>Total number</u>	<u>Number excluding Foreign Domestic Helpers</u>	<u>Children aged 0-14</u>
Filipinos	142 556	16 251	2 680
Indonesians	50 494	4 800	165
British	18 909	18 901	3 538
Indians	18 543	17 357	3 690
Thais	14 342	9 357	233
Japanese	14 180	14 172	3 251
Nepalese	12 564	12 012	1 305
Pakistanis	11 017	11 009	3 131

In 2001 there were 7,195 male and 5,369 female Nepalese residing in Hong Kong, making a total of 12,564 (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001b). 81.8% of them were married. 45% of them were born in Hong Kong. The median age was 28. There were 1,305 children aged 14 and under. 83.7% Nepalese spoke English and 2.1% spoke Chinese (Cantonese) as the Usual Language⁶. 5.9% (or 664) Nepalese had kindergarten or no education, and 9.2% (or 1,033) had primary education. 92.1% Nepalese participated in the workforce. It can be concluded that the Nepalese in Hong Kong is a relatively young population. They were over-represented in craft and related work at 42.2% and elementary occupations at 42.2%; while the distribution in the two categories for the whole population was 27.5% and 14.3% respectively. 55.6% of Nepalese males and 13.2% of females worked in the construction sector. Only 7.1% Nepalese were in professional or managerial positions, while the distribution in these occupations for the whole population is 35%.

⁶ Usual Language is the language commonly spoken at home.

According to the 2001 Census, 7.3% of the Nepalese working population were earning less than HK\$4,000 a month whereas the overall median for the working population is HK\$10,000 (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001b: 70). In a separate study on the employment of South Asians in Hong Kong (Working Group of SIP & Unison Hong Kong 2003), among the 402 respondents (66.7% were Nepalese), only 40% had full time jobs; about 20% had part time or casual part time jobs. Nearly 40% of the respondents were unemployed at the time of survey. The majority of respondents worked in low-skilled or elementary occupations, such as construction workers (30%) and security guards (15.9%).

The above statistics show that Nepalese as a group have low socio-economic status in Hong Kong. They mainly engage in menial jobs. In another study (Government of the HKSAR 2000), none out of the 8,100 Nepalese surveyed could read or write Chinese. Although 97.5% of the respondents reported that they could read and write English, only 41% said they spoke it fluently. This suggests that their standard of English is not high on average. It can be concluded that some Nepalese parents may be able to help their children with their studies, especially English, but not Chinese. And it is unlikely that they can support their learning with extra resources, or enrich their education with a broad learning experience. Being such a low income group, the likely education option for their children is schools in the public sector.

Back in Nepal, there are great variations in literacy rates among the various ethnic groups (Lee 2002). According to Lee, many disadvantaged groups lack confidence and have low self esteem. They perceive education to be irrelevant to the improvement of their socio-economic conditions. This attitude may pose hindrance for some Nepalese in Hong Kong to put their children in schools, push them to achieve, or support their learning.

2.3 Measure of achievement

Introduction

This section will discuss the various areas regarding pupil achievement in Hong Kong, beginning with the definitions of achievement. The statistics of achievement at territory-wide level is tentative and preliminary. Achievement data is not readily available and tends to be fragmented. There is no clearly defined level of standard of different subjects and levels. Monitoring of achievement by ethnicity and gender of pupils are not formal requirements by the EMB. Since the government does not collect achievement statistics with ethnic group as one of the variables, there is no quantitative data to substantiate the academic achievement of any minority ethnic group in primary or secondary schools in Hong Kong. For the sake of this study, therefore, it is necessary to rely on reports from the teachers and EMB inspection reports.

Among the six government and aided primary schools on the EMB's list, two were externally reviewed by the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) in 2004; and a third one was inspected in 2005. There were a total of 1,146 minority ethnic pupils in the three schools. The reports of the schools may provide a preliminary picture of the achievement of minority ethnic pupils in the public school system in Hong Kong (see section below on *Achievement of minority ethnic pupils*). The three schools are not the schools in this case study.

Defining achievement (MacGilchrist et al. 2004: 25)

Quoting David Hargreaves and colleagues (ILEA 1984, cited in MacGilchrist 2004), MacGilchrist et al. suggest that there are at least four aspects of achievement that a school needs to develop in the pupils:

- (a) The capacity to remember and use facts: This aspect concerns the type of achievement required to succeed in public examinations and emphasizes the

ability of the pupils in memorizing facts and knowledge and reproduce them in a written form;

- (b) The practical and spoken skills: This aspect concerns the practical capacity to apply knowledge in authentic situations, the application of problem-solving and investigation skills;
- (c) Personal and social skills: This aspect concerns the capacity to communicate and relate to others. It also concerns personal attributes such as initiative, self-reliance and leadership skills;
- (d) Motivation and self-confidence: This concerns a person's self image and ability, initiative, and perseverance in times of difficulties.

MacGilchrist et al. suggest that education systems have been focused on measuring pupils in the first aspect – the capacity to remember and use facts and the ability to pass examinations, but most education systems cannot effectively measure the other three aspects which are significant to success in life after formal schooling. Pupil achievement is generally compared in terms of data collected on reading and writing of English, Mathematics and Science at the different Key Stages (e.g. DfES 2004a, 2005a). In addition to the four aspects above, MacGilchrist et al. propose that a broader notion of achievement that includes 21st century skills such as higher order problem solving skills, creativity and proficiency in information and communication technology skills is needed to reflect the changing needs of society.

Assessing achievement in Hong Kong primary schools

The Seven Learning Goals (EMB online)

The EMB has proposed Seven Learning Goals for Hong Kong's nine-year compulsory education. In various areas, the Seven Learning Goals are similar to David Hargreaves et al. and MacGilchrist et al.'s definition of achievement. The Seven Learning Goals are as follows:

- (a) Responsibility: Recognize their roles and responsibilities as members in the family, the society, the nation, and show concern for their well-being;
- (b) National Identity: Understand their national identity and be committed to contributing to the nation and society;
- (c) Habit of Reading: Develop a habit of reading independently;
- (d) Language Skills: Engage in discussion actively and confidently in English and Chinese, including Putonghua;
- (e) Learning Skills: Develop creative thinking and master independent learning skills (e.g. critical thinking, information technology, innumeracy and self management);
- (f) Breadth of Knowledge: Possess a breadth and foundation of knowledge in the Eight Key Learning Areas; and
- (g) Healthy Lifestyle: Lead a healthy lifestyle and develop an interest in and appreciation of aesthetic and physical activities.

The recognition of nationality is repeated in two of the goals, and is more politically orientated than achievement orientated (further discussion in *Section 3.4, The school curriculum*). This goal may not be relevant to the Nepalese pupils. Developing the habit of reading is seen to bear significance in their definition as a learning goal. Reading is also promoted as one of the Four Key Tasks⁷ that schools should implement in their curriculum.

Achievement of the Seven Learning Goals cannot be easily measured. In general, teacher assessments are used to measure pupils' achievement in primary schools. These are usually conducted in the form of written tests. Reporting to parents is traditionally in the form of summative examination paper and reports, but parents are not aware of the expected level of competency in the subjects and whether their children have achieved them. Monitoring of pupil achievement is not a common practice in schools.

⁷ According to *Learning to learn – the way forward in curriculum development* published by the CDC in 2001, the four key tasks are moral and civic education, reading to learn, project learning and information technology for interactive learning.

Teachers are encouraged to employ different modes of assessments to better examine those abilities that are not easily assessed through written tests (EC 2000) but whether the assessments assess the Seven Learning Goals is not monitored, nor has there been systematic training to teach teachers to design different modes of assessments other than the traditional written mode. In rhetoric the EMB promotes the Seven Learning Goals; in practice they assess the pupils' competency in Mathematics and the skills of English and Chinese through territory-wide assessments.

The territory-wide assessments: Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) and Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA)

There are two territory-wide assessments for primary school pupils in place: the Pre-S1 HKAT and the TSA. Both assessments assess the pupils' performance in the Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. The assessment statistics of individual schools is restricted to the schools only and is not available to the public. There are no league tables of schools in Hong Kong.

Although the Pre-S1 HKAT is conducted in secondary schools before pupils begin secondary one, it has significance for primary schools. This is because the sampled results of the Pre-S1 HKAT are 'used as the scaling tool in the revised Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System to scale the internal assessment results of the coming cohort of Primary Six pupils proceeding to Secondary One' (EMB 2006b). This means the Pre-S1 HKAT determines the percentage of pupils in each of the primary schools to be allocated to the different secondary school bandings⁸ in the coming years. Thus the banding allocation and SSPA results have a washback effect on the number of pupil enrolment in primary schools. The primary schools' priority, consequently, is to ensure that their pupils get the best possible results in the Pre-S1 HKAT. Learning Chinese, English and Mathematics is likely to replace the Seven Learning Goals or Four Key Tasks as the curriculum goals in most schools. This emphasis on achievement of Chinese

⁸ There are 3 bandings, namely Band 1, Band 2 and Band 3. An equal proportion of pupils is allocated to each band.

in public examinations puts NCS pupils at a disadvantage. For the schools, having minority ethnic pupils is undesirable because they may lower the schools' examination performance, which will affect its reputation, pupil intake, and even survival.

In primary, the TSA is a basic competency assessment (HKEAA online). It is fully implemented in the 2005/06 school year. It is compulsory, conducted in every primary and secondary school, and administered centrally. It measures the attainment of the primary pupils against the basic level of competency standards defined for English, Chinese and Mathematics at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 respectively). There is one English paper, one Chinese paper, and two Mathematics paper – one in English and one in Chinese. Mainstream pupils and NCS pupils take the same English and Chinese papers. Schools have the option not to enroll their NCS pupils and pupils who do not follow the local curriculum for the Chinese paper (HKEAA 2004b).

School reports of the results are provided to all participating schools to help them understand the overall performance of their pupils, but there are no reports on individuals. The results are restricted to the school management. Even teachers in the schools have no access to the reports. HKEAA claims the reports are provided for the purpose of facilitating the schools to develop plans to improve their teaching and learning, not for inter-school comparison. There are sample papers provided on the HKEAA website to exemplify the expected competency standard but the public has no knowledge of how individual school is performing in the different subject areas.

The EMB is moving towards the direction of systematic monitoring of the academic achievement of pupils on a school basis, but is trying to find the appropriate balance of the extent of information that is available to the public. The EMB acknowledges that by disclosing the results of individual schools and thereby indirectly creating a league table, the TSA would become a high stakes assessment that could induce detrimental consequences. For example, schools are likely to focus their effort on drilling their pupils in Chinese, English and Mathematics at the expense of a balanced curriculum, although

this may be already happening. The TSA is the only territory-wide assessment conducted in primary level but the statistics are not comprehensive. There is no breakdown of data according to gender, district, school type, language of instruction, or ethnicity.

Education statistics and achievement

The first batch of systematic education statistics was available for 2004 (EC 2004) and there were 11 items related to primary school pupils' performance. Items under 'attainment' provide little information to the public about the achievement of the pupils at the stated levels, nor do they suggest grade targets for parents or educators to measure their children's performance against. For example, the statistic that in 2003, primary school pupils use computers 10.7 hours a week on average (Item 21) does not inform the public about the expected level of computer literacy of a primary six pupil. Other items such as 'Students' Participation in School Music, Speech, Drama and Dance Festivals' (Item 24) provide the percentage or ratio of students' participation in the Festivals. When the government collects data on the percentage of participation, schools are directed towards planning their activities to meet the requirement, which do not necessarily reflect achievement.

'The Reading Literacy of Students at Primary 4 Level in Hong Kong and Selected Countries' (Item 17) and 'The Mathematics and Science Achievement of Students at the Age of 9 and 13 in Hong Kong and Selected Countries' (Item 18) suggest that Hong Kong pupils are performing better than average in Reading Literacy, Mathematics and Science. This information is misleading as there is no supplementary information to explain that the pupils who participated in the test is by voluntary school enrollment, and is not a representation of the average achievement of the primary school pupils.

The 2004 Education Statistics is the first attempt on the part of the government to present some statistics about education to the public in a systematic format. There is no sensitive information or specific reference to individual schools or groups of schools. There is not one item that relates to minority ethnic pupils in the 2004 Education Statistics.

Achievement of minority ethnic pupils

In the primary schools that admit large numbers of pupils of minority ethnic origin, the ethnic mix of the pupils is varied and the contexts of the schools are different. The proportion of subjects that uses Chinese or English as the language of instruction may be different from school to school.

Three schools are described here to provide some information of the achievement of minority ethnic pupils in public schools. This information is based on qualitative written reports of the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) of the EMB. All three schools are on the EMB's list of schools for minority ethnic pupils. Two of the schools – one government and one aided were externally reviewed in April 2004 and the third one, an aided school was inspected in late 2005, after the field work of this study was completed.

Pupils in the aided school reviewed come from socio-economic background similar to School B. At the time of external review, there were 87 NCS pupils among a pupil population of 636 in the school. The ethnicity of these 87 pupils was not specified. The school had started admitting minority ethnic pupils in September 2002, the same time as the case-study schools, and they were put in an English stream especially created for them, semi-segregated from the local pupils. This arrangement was similar to School B. In the section of the Report describing the NCS pupils' achievement, the reviewers briefly reported that there were significant individual differences in the level of achievement of most pupils, and the school had appropriate strategies to support them (QAD 2004a).

The government school specifically caters for NCS children. The medium of instruction is English, and the pupils traditionally do not participate in the Chinese paper in the HKAT⁹. At the time of school review, there were 750 pupils in the school. The ethnicity distribution of the pupils was: Indian: 17%; Pakistani: 32%; Filipino: 35%; Nepalese: 8%;

⁹ The HKAT was administered in primary schools until 2003.

Chinese: 3% and Others: 5%¹⁰. The reviewers reported that the 'students' academic standards in English were consistently maintained at a higher level than the territory average in HKAT whilst results in Mathematics were well below the territory average in the past two years' (QAD 2004b: 8). The pupils were described as 'positive', 'confident' and 'got along well with children of different nationalities and achieved racial harmony' (QAD 2004b: 8). It is observed that these positive comments are affective in nature and relate to some elements of MacGilchrist et al. definition of achievement.

Pupils in the third school come from very disadvantaged socio-economic background, similar to pupils in School A. It had 393 pupils, of which 332 were NCS at the time of inspection. The school began admitting minority ethnic pupils in 1998-99. The ethnic mix of the pupils at the time of inspection is unavailable. The school runs an English stream for its NCS pupils. It received a harsh report from the QAD, citing 'far from satisfactory' curriculum and school management (QAD 2006: 17, 31); '...given the mode of teaching, students' communication, analyzing skills and creativity cannot be fully developed. The English language skills of NCS students are satisfactory, but...their presentation ability in spoken Chinese..., abilities to comprehend mathematical concepts and solve problems are yet to be developed...most students' reading habits have not yet been fully developed' (ibid.: 19-20). Regarding school assessments, the quality of test and examination papers is quoted as 'unsatisfactory' (ibid.: 21). It was even discovered that the questions in mock examination papers were 'nearly the same as the actual examination questions', and therefore, 'seriously affected the validity of the examination and cannot accurately reflect the actual learning performance of students' (ibid. 22). The Report of this school raises two important issues: the quality of education the minority ethnic pupils receive; and the validity of teacher assessments in reflecting pupil performance, especially when the results may be unsatisfactory. The former is found to concur with the findings in Loper et al.'s study (2004) (see *Section 3.5*), and confirmed by the pupils in this study. The second issue may be an area for further study, which possibly includes the causes for the problem, and measures to improve the validity of assessments.

¹⁰ Information obtained from the School's website; accessed in July 2004.

In this Report, the inspectors related more widely and intensively concerning pupil achievement than in the previous two Reports. Generic skills, creativity, and computer skills, as well as the pupils' performance in the three core subjects were included. As substantiated in the Reports of the three schools, teachers' expectations are consistently low for the minority ethnic pupils. Pupils' achievement gap against the expected level is likely to increase as they move up the Key Stages.

Some schools have started to admit minority ethnic pupils in September 2004. The extent of support that the schools can provide for these pupils varies from school to school and is likely to be insufficient because of their varied needs. The EMB has commissioned a three-year longitudinal study in 2004 to understand the integration of minority ethnic pupils in local schools (Legislative Council Secretariat 2006). The study will track the development and adaptation of these pupils allocated to primary one in the mainstream schools in the 2004-05 school year until they complete primary three in 2007. The focus of the study is on their adaptation, not on achievement, which is an issue the EMB continues to evade.

2.4 The education of Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) pupils in Hong Kong

The education of NCS children

The need to provide education for NCS children is not new in Hong Kong. International schools and schools of the English Schools Foundation (ESF) have a long history in the territory. There are a total of 46 international and ESF schools that offer primary education in the 2005/06 school year, up from 37 in 2000/01. The international schools usually offer the curriculum of a foreign country with the intention of facilitating the children of expatriates to continue their education smoothly when they return to their home country. Since these families do not see their children's long-term future as being in Hong Kong, knowledge of Chinese has not been regarded as essential (HKSAR 2003).

Fees at the international schools vary. They are usually expensive and are out of reach of the average income families. The ESF mainly serve the international and English-speaking communities. For families who can afford the fees, admission into international and ESF schools is competitive and there are long waiting lists.

Educational issues related to NCS pupils, such as admission, curriculum and language of instruction have traditionally remained in the international school systems, separate from the local system. There is no mention of multicultural education or education of minorities in the education aims or reforms in 2000 (EC 2000). Although as Ms Linn (Linn 2005) said, international schools and ESF schools were not the traditional choice of minority ethnic families, they have been invisible in the local schools until recent years.

While some minority ethnic pupils may choose to attend private schools, provision for these children in the public sector is not taken for granted. For some years, there were only two government and two aided primary schools that mainly catered for them. Places were limited and the children might have to travel a long way to the schools. The two government primary schools use English as the medium of instruction and teach Chinese as a second language and offer other languages such as French and Hindi as subjects in the curriculum. In 2002, there were four aided primary schools for NCS pupils on the EMB website. All four schools run a separate stream for the NCS pupils and admit local Chinese pupils as well. Until 2004/05, there was one government secondary school on the list. The list was further updated to eight primary and three secondary schools in July 2006.

The initiation and induction programmes

There are two major support programmes to facilitate the pupils' adaptation in local schools and in Hong Kong society. However, attendance on a support programme before enrolling into a local school is not compulsory. The Induction Programme was introduced in 2000, funded by the EMB but run by NGOs. Each class of the programme lasts for 60 hours. Content of the programme usually includes:

- ❖ Knowing the local community and culture;
- ❖ Knowing the local education system; and
- ❖ Learning basic Chinese and English.

A more lengthy support programme -- the 6-month Full-time Initiation Programme was introduced in 2002. It is operated in the school setting, and a block grant, calculated on the basis of a class of 20 children, is given to the school for operation of the programme. Schools that have recruited fewer than 20 children at one time, will be unable to offer the programme. Content of the programme is suggested to include:

- ❖ English and Chinese languages;
- ❖ Learning skills;
- ❖ Personal development;
- ❖ Social adaptation; and
- ❖ Cultural subject.

Despite the fact that attendance on an Induction Programme ought to greatly facilitate NCS pupils' adaptation into local schools, the benefit of it is not recognized by the parents. As revealed in the findings of this study, parents prefer to enroll their children into schools directly (see *Section 5.3, The EMB's adaptation programmes*). Once the children are attending schools, they are busy trying to catch up with the teaching content and would have no incentive to join the Programme.

Some of the recent developments in education policy and in the system regarding the minority ethnic pupils

Significant changes and improvements regarding the education of minority ethnic pupils have taken place since the 2004/05 school year. The most influential change occurred with the Primary One Admission (POA) system which formally opens the system to the NCS pupils. From 2004/05 onwards, NCS pupils can apply for admission to government

or aided primary schools in their district and be accepted. This is an important step forward, as contended by Tikly et al. (2004), invisibility from government policy of some minority groups makes it difficult for their underachievement to be challenged.

As there is no quota system to regulate the migration of minorities, there were no official statistics about them before the 2001 Population Census was taken (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001a, 2001b; Government of the HKSAR 2005). The government's provision of social services has been 'almost entirely a matter that concerned persons of Chinese origin' (Government of the HKSAR 2005: paragraph 313). For years there were no departments in the EMB that specifically catered for the education of NCS pupils. There was only a telephone number for enquiry on placement issues on the EMB's website (Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004). A page entitled 'Contact Us' was added in July 2005, and three sections of the EMB together with their functions were listed:

- (a) Language Support Section: Curriculum support and consultancy service for schools;
- (b) Placement and Support Section: Placement assistance for the non-Chinese speaking children;
- (c) Newly Arrived Children Support Unit: (a) Before admission and early stage of admission to schools; (b) 4-week summer bridging programme, 60-hour Induction programme and 6-month Initiation programme.

Information on education and support services for NCS pupils on the EMB website used to contain only a few pages. It provided some basic information of the schools that accept NCS pupils, mostly international schools. Information concerning the education system in Hong Kong in seven languages, including Nepali is provided in 'Your Guide to the Services in Hong Kong' and is published by the Home Affairs Bureau (2005a), not the EMB¹¹.

¹¹ The EMB has proposed to provide an NCS parent information package introducing the local education system and educational support services for NCS pupils in Nepali, Urdu and Hindi in 2007.

In 2005, an information leaflet on the education services for NCS children is published in English, Tagalog, Thai, Indonesian, Hindi, Urdu, and Nepali. In July 2005, there was a sudden surge of information for minorities on the EMB website to a few dozen pages. An English version of the schools' profiles appeared in the summer of 2006. Although one still needs some English to be able to locate the information online, and a few of the important links lead to pages in Chinese, there is clear evidence that the EMB is taking some initial steps.

2.5 Change of education policy as part of government policy

The macro context

The EMB's change of policy is not an isolated incident. It is in response to the strong calls in the media, the society, the Equal Opportunities Commission of Hong Kong (EOC) and the Legislative Council¹², and to conform to the government's policy to legislate against racial discrimination (HAB 2004). In the Second Report in the light of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva, the EOC 'urges the HKSAR Government to take into consideration the difficulties faced by these (ethnic minority) children and to provide means to integrate them into mainstream schools, and eventually into Hong Kong society' (2005: paragraph 27).

Internationally, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination applies to Hong Kong by extension of the People's Republic of China's ratification of the Convention, and Hong Kong has to fulfill the obligation (HAB 2004). Repeated strong calls for legislation against racial discrimination were issued by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Committee in 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2004. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations 'reminds the HKSAR that

¹² The issue of education of minority ethnic children was first raised in the Legislative Council in 2000, and repeatedly contended in the Council thereafter (Legislative Council Secretariat 2006).

the provisions of the Covenant constitute a legal obligation on the part of the States parties' (2001: paragraph 27). Article 5 of the Convention states that:

'...States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law ...'

(HAB 2004: 2)

Possibly in response to the international pressure, the consultative document, 'Legislating against Racial Discrimination: A Consultative Paper'¹³ was published in September 2004 to invite public opinion on legislation. Regarding the education rights of all eligible children, the consultative document states that:

'It should be made unlawful for the responsible body for an educational establishment (a school, institution or university) to discriminate on the ground of race in respect of admissions or the treatment of students.'

(HAB 2004: paragraph 51)

However, in the Consultative Paper, problems created by language barriers are not interpreted as racial discrimination (Wong 2005) despite the fact that the inability to read and write Chinese is often cited as a reason for not employing the minorities who can speak the language (Murphy 2004b). Racial harassment in schools is also not included as racial harassment in the Paper.

The EMB's official support mechanisms

Since 2000, government and aided primary schools that admit NCS pupils who study in Hong Kong for the first time, can apply for the one-off School-Based Support Scheme Grant (HK\$2,633 per pupil in 2006/07). The schools can use the Grant to provide

¹³ The First Reading and commencement of the Second Reading Debate of the Race Discrimination Bill are conducted by the Legislative Council on 15/12/2006; and a Bills Committee is formed to study the Bill.

school-based support service to the pupils. Such services usually include the provision of supplementary language lessons, orientation programmes and purchasing of resource materials. However, this funding is allocated once for every child, so only the first school he/she attends is eligible for it.

In the ‘Response to the list of issues presented by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (of the United Nations) on 21 May 2004’, the Government of the HKSAR was asked to

‘describe support mechanisms that are in place, if any, to assist ethnic minority students in schools to cope with subjects that are taught using Chinese as the medium of instruction. What monitoring mechanisms are in place, if any?’

(Government of the HKSAR 2004: paragraph 25)

In response, the government states the following measures:

(a) Support measures for all schools, including those with large intake of minority children:

- ❖ Setting a clear direction in curriculum development;
- ❖ Providing professional development opportunities for teachers;
- ❖ Providing curriculum resources to support teachers;
- ❖ Developing an e-sharing platform of experiences and resources, that will include the learning needs of non-Chinese speaking students;
- ❖ The Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme/The Intensive Learning Support Grant;
- ❖ The Student Guidance Grant for the schools to employ student guidance personnel;
- ❖ The School-based Support Scheme: one-off grants made to schools to support newly arrived children;
- ❖ 60-hour Induction Programme run by non-government organizations, with

government subvention;

- ❖ Six-month Initiation Programme for newly arrived children;

(b) Specific support measures for schools with a large intake of ethnic minority children:

- ❖ Providing school-based support on adaptation of the curriculum;
- ❖ Forming a mutual support network of the schools;

(c) Measures introduced from the summer of 2004:

- ❖ Four-week Bridging Programme run during the summer vacation for minority children entering primary one in local schools¹⁴;
- ❖ Assessment of minority pupils' Chinese language standard in primary six to help parents make informed choices for secondary schools;
- ❖ Information for schools with non-Chinese students about the background information of the minorities;
- ❖ Language support to teachers in terms of sharing of good practices and experience in teaching Chinese to non-Chinese speaking children;
- ❖ Central supervision and liaison by the Education and Manpower Bureau.

Most of these support measures are adopted from the recommendations of a local study by YMMSS in 2000 (see *Section 3.5*). However, it can be observed that these support measures proposed by the government involve little extra resources, and some could be rhetoric in nature when there is insufficient commitment (e.g. setting a clear direction in curriculum development; central supervision and liaison by the EMB). It can be concluded that most of the support measures are existing measures for local pupils stretched to include the NCS pupils (e.g. the Student Guidance Grant). It waits to be seen in the case-study schools how effective these measures are.

¹⁴ The Four-week Bridging Programme will be extended to cover pupils proceeding to primary 2, 3 and 4 in 2007.

Among the proposed measures, it is observed that the education resources and sharing platform on the EMB website is not useful as teaching reference. The school-based curriculum from individual schools posted on the site is not informative, and the work of some projects is crude. The programme on teaching the strokes of writing Chinese is a commercial programme published in Taiwan teaching Chinese calligraphy using the Chinese brush. It is irrelevant to NCS pupils who want to learn to write the basic strokes using a pen or pencil. Furthermore, the instruction is complicated and in Chinese, so it is not suitable for self study or for non-Chinese parents who want to help their children. The programme is obviously not designed for second language learners.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to introduce issues relating to the education of minority ethnic pupils in Hong Kong. To recap, the quality of education provided to the pupils depends to a large extent on individual schools. The minority children's achievement is dubious. Assessment data is unreliable. Education of minority ethnic pupils has drawn the attention of local as well as international criticisms. The EMB has implemented some measures to support the education of the pupils, but these measures seem largely rhetorical in nature. At this initial stage, the findings suggest that there is a lack of genuine commitment at the government level to support the minority ethnic pupils and raise their achievement.

The next chapter builds on this background and introduces the literature pertinent to the study. Research on minority education is fairly recent in Hong Kong, and there is not a lot of literature. There have been, however, a lot of studies conducted in other countries and these will be drawn on to provide important comparative evidence relating to minority education.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provides an overview to the background of the education of the Nepalese pupils in Hong Kong. It explores the macro contexts that may have led to the recent changes in education policies towards the minority ethnic pupils. The aim of this chapter is to explore the findings concerning the achievement of minority ethnic children in the existing literature. The findings are expected to inform this study, identify the gaps in our knowledge, and provide a framework for the design of this study and the questionnaires.

Section 3.2 begins with a discussion of the various understandings of equality of opportunity. This is significant because the kind of understanding of this concept adopted by a government or institution would serve to inform the underlying values that guide their policies and practices. Section 3.3 relates the findings from research on minority ethnic pupils' achievement in other countries, mainly in the UK and United States where the education of ethnic minorities has received a lot of attention.

This is followed by section 3.4 which explores the issues discussed in 3.3 in the local context. Section 3.5 explores Nepalese pupils' barriers to achievement and their education needs as identified in selected local research. Language, especially the Chinese language, which is commonly regarded as the major barrier to achievement facing minority ethnic pupils as well as constituting their major educational need, is discussed in section 3.6. It will be explained why Chinese is difficult to learn for the Nepalese and other NCS children. Finally, section 3.7 is the conclusion where I will consider the implications of the literature for this study.

3.2 Equality of opportunity

Minority ethnic education is a value laden issue. An important value that underlies it is the concept of equality of opportunity. The terms 'equality of opportunity' and 'equal opportunity' are used interchangeably in this study. Equality of opportunity is a phrase with different layers of meanings and interpretations. It may mean different things to different people, but is often treated as if there is consensus on its meaning. The groups with power may apply the meaning that most likely perpetuates and not jeopardizes their advantageous position, and serves their political purposes (Arora 2005). Three commonly known approaches currently in use in the UK are (a) equal opportunity as equal treatment; (b) equal opportunity as equal access; and (c) equal opportunity as equal share (ibid. 2005: 6).

Equal opportunity as equal treatment

This approach assumes that as long as there is no deliberate unfair discrimination against another person, there is equal opportunity (Arora 2005). This approach also assumes that by forbidding unfair treatment, existing practices of inequality will automatically disappear. In effect, this approach when applied to the Hong Kong situation, may suggest that the minority children be treated as local children in their schooling without additional support that is not given to their local peers.

There is evidence that the EMB is employing this understanding when Professor Li, Secretary for EMB, justified why the EMB had not kept separate statistics of school-aged minority ethnic children. Li explained that the EMB's 'planning for schools is premised on our projection of the overall student population' (2005a). In a separate interview, Deputy Secretary for EMB, Ms Linn explained that the EMB did not want these children to be 'singled out' (Chan 2005b).

The EMB is employing the 'equal opportunity as equal treatment' understanding which conveniently maintains the status quo, justifies their passivity, reluctance and failure to

keep the statistics of children from minority origins. Pupils of different ethnic origins do not experience equal educational opportunities or have the same educational needs (Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Lee 2002). The EMB cannot possibly formulate an overall plan without the statistics of school-aged children from minority backgrounds. In the UK, pupil performance is analyzed by ethnicity and other contextual factors (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; DfES 2005a, 2006; OFSTED 1999, 2004a).

Legislator Yeung Sum has commented that the lack of official statistics makes it difficult to force the administration to change their education policy (Clem 2006b). Since there are no statistics on the minority ethnic pupils and their achievement, there is no evidence that they are underachieving or have failed to attain the basic competence of academic mastery expected at the end of the key stages (see *Section 2.3*). Thus no government departments need to take responsibility or actions to remedy the situation. This casts doubts on the sincerity of the EMB's commitment to support the education of these children. Their support measures may be more cosmetic than effective.

Equal opportunity as equal access

This approach stresses that equal opportunity should be provided at the point of access. It is similar to approaches discussed by authors such as Halsey et al. (1980) and Gay (2004). The basic definition of this approach is concerned with the formal opportunities of access and participation, so there is 'no legal barrier' to prevent a child from entering any form of education. The 'assumption is that when these (diverse) groups become students in majority schools, equal educational opportunity is achieved'; the quality of the curriculum content and instructional processes are not factors of concern (Gay 2004b: 11). The EMB's opening of the public education system to NCS children is a formal endeavor towards providing equality of opportunity in this understanding.

The EOC shares the view of the EMB and defines equal opportunity in terms of access and participation. According to their chairperson, Wong (2003), 'equal opportunity does not mean that everyone is the same, but refers to equal opportunity in participation, based

on an individual's talent and abilities.' It is a disappointment that the EOC, whose statutory duty is to administer Hong Kong's discrimination laws, and will in the future oversee the laws of racial discrimination, defines equal opportunity at this basic and limited level. Moreover, the condition 'based on an individual's talent and abilities' suggests that the determining factor is personal attribute rather than government responsibility. If educational equality is defined at this basic level of access to schools and the average classrooms, then it seems to have been attained in Hong Kong. Equal access is a necessary condition. But education systems must ultimately be judged by the degree to which it is effective in helping individuals to achieve to their potential.

Equal opportunity as equal share

This third approach incorporates the first two and also implies that equal opportunity 'can only truly exist when the benefits of society or service delivery, such as education and employment, are available and held in equal proportions by the groups, which make up our society' (Arora 2005: 6). This approach corresponds to Edmond's (1979, 1986) and Halsey et al.'s (1980) call for schools to work towards having an equal proportion of children from different groups, including middle-income children, low-income children and minorities, being able to demonstrate achievement of academic mastery.

Most literature from the UK and America that is concerned with the underachievement of minority groups in comparison with the main groups derives from this understanding of equality of opportunity which is the equality of outcome (e.g. Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Eccles 1997; Edmonds 1986; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Halsey et al. 1980; Sleeter & Grant 2003; Tikly et al. 2004). This understanding means that on average, and all other things being equal, it is reasonable to assume that the members of each group (based on social class, gender, and ethnicity) are equally capable of success and achieve to their potential.

However, Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Sleeter and Grant (2003) have contended that the macro contexts of education and the culture of chasing education 'standards', league

tables, tiering in subjects, market oriented culture and other factors have led to unfair selection in schools. Some pupil groups do not have equal opportunity to achieve and realize their potential. In order to attain a higher position in the league tables, schools may focus their resources on pupils who have more support from home, and are more likely to perform better in public assessments. Minorities and pupils from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are perceived to lack support from home. They are more likely to be assigned to lower sets, where they usually access a substandard curriculum and a ceiling is imposed on their public examination results.

This situation where resource is allocated to pupils who are already resourceful and more likely to succeed rather than according to pupils' needs may find resemblance in Hong Kong where schools have to survive in a competitive environment. Schools need good public assessment results to attract the best pupils and maintain pupil enrolment. The minority ethnic pupils cannot help the schools to achieve a commendable result in the public assessments, and they are costly to support. Their parents have low socio-economic status and little power in society. It remains to be seen how the case study schools deploy their resources to support the Nepalese pupils and whether there are strategic plans to enable them to access the full curriculum.

To conclude, the EMB's education aims on equal opportunity are limited in scope. At the present level, the minority groups cannot possibly compete on equal footing with the majority groups, in school or at work in the future. Because of the lack of achievement data, it is not known how many are able to stay in the system and complete the different stages.

Equal opportunity in Hong Kong schools

Several local studies (Leung & Yan 2003; Loper 2001; YMMSS 2000) have urged the EMB to formulate a multi-ethnic policy to combat racial discrimination, and ensure that children from different ethnic backgrounds enjoy equal opportunities in education.

However, neither equal opportunity nor race discrimination seems to have a high priority with the EMB.

In the School Administration Guide for primary and secondary schools, the guideline 'Schools shall eliminate all forms of discrimination in their policies and procedures' is all that can be found (EMB online). No further details and examples of discrimination in schools are provided. When the EMB's attitude is unenthusiastic, schools are unlikely to take the issues seriously.

In the circular *Principles of Equal Opportunities* (EMB Circular 33/2003), the EMB advises schools on perceived problems which might arise with the inclusion of pupils with special education needs (SEN). The same principles are assumed to apply to the minority ethnic pupils, as there are no similar circulars that relate to them. The circular instructs that:

'Schools have the responsibility to formulate a policy of equal opportunities and to promote the principle of equal opportunities to their staff, students and parents to raise the awareness on this front. Schools should work with them to promote integrated education, avoid any direct or indirect discrimination, and create a harmonious and inclusive school environment.' (paragraph A1)

According to the circular, a school's policy on equal opportunities is expected to be on the level of awareness, access and environment. The schools' obligation is to provide a facilitative environment for their SEN and minority pupils. Although the formulation of the policy of equal opportunities is encouraged, the danger is that a school's policy on equal opportunities could remain on paper and not supported by concrete actions.

Race equality policy in the U.K. (DfES 2004b)

In the UK, schools have a statutory obligation to implement the Race Equality Policy. Schools usually have written policies on bullying and established procedures for handling

complaints about it (Cline et al. 2002). Schools collect and monitor performance data of their pupils of different ethnic groups to provide them with appropriate support (OFSTED 1999, 2002b). Guidelines published by the DfES to help schools implement their statutory Race Equality Policy emphasizes on ‘delivering practical results and outcomes for pupils’ and suggest that schools should set ‘phased targets’ and year-on-year targets (2004b: 3). In practice, individual school’s implementation of the Policy may be hard to monitor, but the Policy spells out explicit guidelines that schools should aim to achieve. The Key Performance Outcomes are (2004: 4-6):

- (a) Raising attainment and closing the achievement gap;
- (b) Improvements in good race relations;
- (c) Improved pupil behaviour;
- (d) Parental and community involvement;
- (e) A diverse and representative workforce; and
- (f) A fair and representative admissions policy.

With some local modification, these targets may be considered for our long term targets. Minority ethnic education has been studied in other countries for many years, and Hong Kong has the advantage of learning from their experience and practices.

3.3 Findings from the international literature

In the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States, there is much research on the educational needs, school achievement and effective school practices that raise the achievement of minority ethnic pupils (e.g. Banks 2002; Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Blair 2002; Board of Ethnic Equality 2000; DfES 2005a; DIECEC 1999; Dimmock & Walker 2005; Gay 2004b; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Henze & ARC Associates 2000; Hustinx 2002; Leeman 2003; OFSTED 1999; Powney et al. 1998; Tikly et al. 2004; Timm 1996). Some minority ethnic groups such as Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Black heritage pupils are

discovered to be persistently achieving on average below other groups in England (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; DfES 2005a, 2006; OFSTED 1999; Tikly et al. 2002).

This section presents findings of different studies. It consists of four parts: factors related to minority ethnic pupils' achievement, their barriers to achievement, good practices at school level for raising achievement, and immigrant and involuntary minorities. According to the literature, language is only one among a number of the pupils' barriers to achievement. This suggests that the EMB's supportive mechanisms (*Section 2.5*) which focus on language may not sufficiently meet the pupils' needs.

Factors related to minority ethnic pupils' achievement

This section discusses in detail some of the major factors related to the pupils' achievement. They turn out to be many, such as: race prejudice in the form of low teacher expectations, disadvantaged socio-economic background, language, identity and self-esteem, the school curriculum, teachers and teaching, target setting and monitoring, link with parents, parental support, leadership, and values and school policy.

Race prejudice in the form of low teacher expectations

Low teacher expectations based on race prejudice are frequently reported. For example, low teacher expectations of pupils from mixed heritage backgrounds often seem to be based on a stereotypical view of their disadvantaged home backgrounds and 'confused' identities (Tikly et al. 2004: 6). As discussed previously, minority ethnic pupils are more likely to be assigned to lower achievement sets than their peers, based on teacher perception rather than their actual performance (Gillborn & Youdell 2000). Larger differences between teacher assessment and public test results for Asian and Black pupils than other ethnic groups are identified (DfES 2006). Some classroom teachers tend to treat minority pupils as a group, ignoring their individual differences (Minami & Ovando 2004). Wright (1992) observed negative teacher interaction with Asian and Afro-Caribbean pupils in multicultural primary classrooms. For example, Afro-Caribbean

pupils were more likely to be singled out for criticism even when several pupils were engaged in the same act or behaviour.

Gougis (1986), through an experiment with black college pupils, found that there is a correlation between race prejudice and emotional stress, and its adverse effect on academic performance. The emotional stress could result in a culmination of achievement deficit that reduces employment opportunity, income, and the quality of life. Thus, race prejudice is at the heart of a vicious cycle that perpetuates inequality.

Disadvantaged socio-economic background

Race and ethnicity are considered in the context of social class and economic background because these dimensions interact in people's lives (Ramsey & Williams 2003). Research has shown that they have a strong correlation with pupils' academic achievement (Edmonds 1979; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Meece & Kurtz-Costes 2001; Tikly et al. 2004). For example, in the UK, a much higher percentage of low achieving pupils are on Free School Meals and from working class backgrounds than from middle class backgrounds.

In the U.K., data show that Indian, Chinese, White and Asian pupils consistently have on average higher levels of achievement, while Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black pupils persistently achieve on average below other ethnic groups across all key stages (DfES 2006). Economically, many more Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black pupils live in areas of high deprivation than White British, Chinese and Indian pupils who are more likely to be classified as 'comfortably off'. There is also a significant minority of poor, working class white children who, it can be argued, are discriminated against by the education system. This shows that socio-economic background is a significant factor that interacts with a range of other factors such as prior achievement, deprivation and other contextual factors, and affects achievement.

Language

Language is a major issue for minority ethnic pupils. For example, pupils newly arrived in the U.K. often need help with basic English. The provision of quality teaching of English as an Additional Language together with a balanced support of the curriculum is an important feature of the schools that successfully raise their achievement (Blair 1998; Tikly et al. 2002). Few schools, however, are able to provide language support to the pupils beyond the initial stages (Cline et al. 2002). A study conducted by CREDE (2003) found that minority ethnic pupils who had attended language support programmes showed significant better achievement in the long term than those who attended only English mainstream programmes.

Learning an additional language requires a lot of hard work and support. The success in learning additional languages is expected to depend on factors such as the age, motivation and aptitude of the learner, exposure to the target language, and opportunity for authentic use. For non-native language speakers, having a command of social language does not necessarily equip them for the more cognitive demanding tasks of the curriculum (Ovando 2004). According to Ovando, this level of cognitive academic language competence needs about five to seven years to develop.

Language plays an important role in our learning even though the language competence required for different subjects is not the same. During the initial period or in primary school while the minority ethnic pupils are learning the language, the subject content is sacrificed. 'The material covered in secondary school is cognitively complex and sequential; content knowledge for each subject is dependent upon the work done in earlier grades' (Syed & Burnett 1999: 54). So, in secondary schools, pupils who have not achieved to their level often have to 'play catching up with their mainstream peers' because there is a void in their subject knowledge (ibid.).

Language is an important part of the culture and identity of people (Syed & Burnett 1999). Minorities as well as majorities should be able to develop their mother tongues in school

(Gundara 2000). Many communities, however, do not provide bilingual instruction for all of their language-minority pupils. This occurs for a variety of reasons, involving factors such as politics, the availability of bilingual teachers, and demographics (Ovando 2004).

Ovando believes that creating bridges using the early socialization patterns of the home language and culture are useful in motivating pupils to learn. But, for many minorities, preserving their culture and mother tongue may not be their priority. For example, in poverty-hit areas of China, many ethnic minorities only want to learn the language (Putonghua) that will enable them to find a job (Teng 2005). So, how do the Nepalese pupils in the study perceive of their mother tongue, ethnic identity and themselves? This will be a key issue to be addressed in later chapters.

Identity and self-esteem

Syed and Burnett (1999) contend that how immigrant pupils perceive their identity has a significant influence on their academic motivation, participation and success. In many schools, a sense of ethnic identity is promoted by parents through teaching children their mother tongue or religious and cultural values (Cline et al. 2002). However, Cline et al. found that in schools where they were a minority, they might have reservations about expressing their ethnic identity openly, even though it was central to their self-identification. And some schools might choose to downplay the ethnic and cultural differences among the pupils, and focused on improving the social relations in the school.

Successful schools attach importance in encouraging their pupils' self-esteem, which is considered one of the most effective ways to raise their achievement (OFSTED 2004b). Watkins (2000) has found that higher self-esteem is associated with higher quality learning strategies in pupils. Henze et al. (2001) recommend that schools which have successfully established a safe environment could turn its effort on building the self-esteem of its pupils.

The school curriculum

Pupil achievement is directly related to the school curriculum. It has two responsibilities in relation to the minority pupils (Powney et al. 1998). One is to ensure that the full curriculum itself is accessible to pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. In general, pupils who are taught curricula that are more rigorous learn more than their peers with similar prior knowledge and backgrounds but are taught less rigorous curricula (Banks et al. 2001). Many minority ethnic children underachieve because they do not find schooling exciting, and too much that is taught is not relevant or has no immediate value to them (Gay 2004a). Another responsibility of the curriculum is to ensure that the explicit and hidden curricula are not racist or endorse prejudice and discrimination.

Tikly et al. (2004) suggest formal and informal inclusion of minority ethnic people within the curriculum. Schools with minority ethnic children should introduce a curriculum that reflects diversity. Schools without minority ethnic children should also learn about other cultures and people.

Banks (2002, 2004) has proposed a multicultural curriculum at four levels. At the basic level, pupils learn about other cultures at special occasions, but the school curriculum remains the same. At higher levels, the pupils take active roles in helping to solve social issues.

Teachers and teaching

All pupils should have access to good quality teaching (Darling-Hammond 2004; Dimmock et al. 2004), and it is established that good teachers and good teaching make the difference to the effectiveness of a lesson. Good experienced teachers are more sensitive to pupils' needs and to individual differences. They are more skilled at engaging and motivating pupils and have a wide repertoire of teaching strategies for different situations (Darling-Hammond 2004). They also have high expectations of all pupils (e.g. Dimmock et al. 2004; OFSTED 2002a, 2004b). Positive effects occur where

teachers ask high order questions and create conditions for deep learning (Mortimore & Sammons 1987).

In a study on South Asian pupils' perceptions of their teachers, the respondents placed their teachers in 3 categories: good, normal and bad (Bhatti 1999). Bad teachers' behaviour is associated with racism. From most of the pupils' accounts, they did not receive a proportional help from their teachers, and had to rely on themselves in order to achieve their aspirations.

Schools and teachers believe there are many advantages to having staff from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Cline et al. 2002; OFSTED 2004b). Although in practice, this may be difficult to achieve. It is considered one of the successful initiatives to raise the achievement of minority ethnic pupils (OFSTED 2004b). Bilingual teaching assistants also have an invaluable role in supporting pupils and the teachers (OFSTED 1999, 2002a). They may work with the teachers in the classrooms, work with individuals or groups out of class, serve as mentors, and as success models to the children.

Different learning styles may be associated with different cultures (Gay 2004). Some ethnic groups may value participative learning styles and some may prefer more individualized learning. Teachers need to understand the distinguished characteristics of the learning styles of their different pupil groups. However, many teachers teaching minority ethnic pupils have reported that they had not received the necessary pre-service or in-service training to teach in multi-ethnic classrooms (Cline et al. 2002).

Assessment, target setting and monitoring

High quality assessments, combined with target setting and progress monitoring are characteristics of the schools that are effective for their minority pupils in different studies (Cunningham et al. 2004; OFSTED 2004a, 2004b). These effective schools identify the pupils' needs and set targets by analyzing the assessment results (Tikly et al.

2002). The headteachers also take the leading role in monitoring and evaluation (OFSTED 2002b). These schools focus on the coverage and quality of the curriculum, the quality of teaching, and progress made by the pupils. Where issues are identified, they are translated into targets and the progress of the targets is then monitored (Tikly et al. 2004). The assessment results can be used to evaluate the work of the school and inform planning.

Since achievement is influenced by a range of interacting factors, it may be difficult to identify and target the dominant factors or issues. DfES (2006) considers the progress made by pupils from different ethnic groups across the key stages using their value added scores, and using contextual value added (CVA) coefficients to examine the effects of ethnicity and other variables on their achievement. CVA models allow for isolating of individual factors (e.g. socio-economic background) while controlling for a range of others (e.g. prior achievement, gender, etc.).

Link with parents and parental support

A key factor of schools that successfully narrow the achievement gap for their minority ethnic pupils is involvement of the parents (Cunningham et al. 2004; DfES 2005a). The schools adopt a range of strategies to involve the parents who participate as partners of the school. Partnership is not confined to improving inter-relations, but means 'listening to parents and keeping an open mind' (Perotti 1994: 94). The schools listen to the parents and modify their practices taking their views into consideration.

Communication with parents should be two-way (Sleeter & Grant 2003). Teachers need to know the expectations parents have for their children, the family's values, and how the children are taught at home (Banks C 2004). Parents need information about the school. They need to know what the school expects their children to learn, how they are taught, and the curriculum in the school. Teachers should meet with parents to explain the curriculum so they can support their children at home (Tikly et al. 2004). Parental involvement allows parents and teachers to reinforce learning and provides the learning

environment that connects the school and home so there are consistent learning expectations and standards. Minority pupil exclusions could be significantly reduced by strengthening links with parents and working with community organizations (DfES 2005a; Parsons et al. 2005).

However, many minority parents are reluctant to get involved with their children's schools, because they lack a sense of empowerment, and believe the schools do not care about their opinion (Banks C 2004; Banks 2002; Gibson 1991; Sleeter & Grant 2003). Many parents have reported that they do not feel respected by the schools, possibly due to poor communication (Blair 2004). Most often, immigrant parents lack knowledge of the local education system and the language used in school to support the pupils' learning (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Cunningham 2004; Parsons et al. 2005; Tikly et al. 2004). They cannot supervise the children's homework or understand their children's language assignments (Gay 2004).

Epstein has experimented with three types of programmes that are found to be effective in supporting minority ethnic parents to improve their children's learning (Hidalgo et al. 2004). Type one activities involve families in workshops that help them create home conditions to support pupil learning. Type two activities focus on improving home-school communication. Information about school programmes, children's progress and circulars are translated into the pupils' mother tongue. Type three activities involve parents in volunteering to support school activities.

Teachers should believe that 'parents care about their children and want the best education for them' (Blair 2004: 47). Many parents have sent their children to local schools reflecting their desire for their children to integrate into mainstream society. In a DfES study (2005a), over half (53%) of the parents/carers of the minority ethnic children reported feeling very involved with their child's education. In another OFSTED study (2004a: 5-6), the Bangladeshi parents 'generally have high aspirations for their children and see educational achievement as a means to better job opportunities and greater social status.' However, some teachers perceive the parents of mixed race, White/Black

Caribbean pupils to have low expectations in education and future aspirations of their children due to their cultural background (Tikly et al. 2004).

Peer group pressure

Peer group pressure not to succeed in schools is frequently reported (e.g. Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Fitzgerald et al. 2000; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Tikly et al. 2004). 35% of the Black Caribbean young men in Fitzgerald et al.'s study reported they experienced peer pressure not to work hard in schools, although 92% of all respondents agreed it was important to have good qualifications.

Social integration

In Cline et al.'s study (2002), minority ethnic children in mainly white schools who had been at their school for a significant length of time were well integrated socially. Children who study in segregated or semi-segregated schools are likely to have more difficulty integrating with the main groups and in society.

Racial bullying

Although there were few cases of physical harassment, verbal racial related name calling and abuse were reported by over a third of the pupils in Cline et al.'s study. In about half of the cases, the situation had continued over an extended period of time, but they were usually not reported.

Leadership

School leadership plays a significant role in a school's policies and practices. Although headteacher is used in the following discussion, leadership in schools may be performed by the headteacher or dispersed among the headteacher, the deputy, the curriculum leader and other senior teachers.

The different demands on headteachers in schools with minority ethnic pupils often require their adoption of a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' leadership style and behavior (Blair 2002; OFSTED 2002b). They need to aspire to democratic values and they also need to have the strength to hold on to their vision, the courage to see it translated into practice and implemented in the school, sometimes in the face of strong resistance and opposition. They have to be proactive in solving issues (Walker 2004).

Headteachers in the successful schools are also instructional leaders, taking leadership role in the curriculum. They see the schools' curriculum as the means for ensuring their vision, and involve themselves actively in managing it and at the same time create a strong team by involving the teachers in the process (OFSTED 2002b). They identify effective strategies to tackle underachievement, and are innovative in experimenting with initiatives to raise pupils' achievement (Tikly et al. 2004).

Values of equality and high expectations

High expectations and equality of opportunity are values that permeate schools that successfully raise the achievement of the minority ethnic pupils (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; OFSTED 2002a, 2002b; Tikly et al. 2004). The headteachers have a clear vision for their school and personal commitment to equal opportunities, which they communicate to their staff (Blair 2002; Leeman 2003; OFSTED 2002a, 2002b, 2004a; Tikly et al. 2004; Walker 2004). They value cultural diversity. Their policies against racism are unambiguous. They are committed to addressing issues of social justice in their schools and building an inclusive culture (Walker 2004). Blair (2002) found the headteachers understood and empathized with the political and social factors that affect the pupils in their achievement. Pupils are valued as they are, and teachers have high expectations of them. This is communicated to the pupils and their parents. Pupils know what is expected of them. The values permeate the school's structure and systems, and manifest in its practices.

A safe school, ethos of respect and clear policy towards racism

‘Ensuring the safety and security of all pupils is a necessary condition for enhancing educational achievement’ (Cline et al. 2002: 93). In a multi-ethnic school, the headteachers need to create a safe environment and all pupils should know that they are not subject to racist comments or treatment (Henze et al. 2001; Landsman 2004). Peer conflicts at school can have emotional burden on pupils (Leeman 2003), and not all pupils can manage them. Headteachers should promote a culture of mutual respect and trust in their schools (Tikly et al. 2004), and there are clear and consistent approaches to bad behaviour and racial bullying.

It is recognized that each school exists in a different context that may hinder or support the development of positive interethnic relations (Henze & ARC 2000). Headteachers usually set priorities depending on the contexts and the kinds of needs identified as most salient in their schools. Some schools may face serious problems of interethnic conflict and safety, and the priority of these schools is to establish a safe environment (Henze et al. 2001). Others that are already safe can focus their effort on issues like creating a sense of community, celebrating differences or helping individual students to reach their potential.

A learning school

Teachers teaching in multi-ethnic or mono-ethnic schools need to learn, read, reflect, go to conferences and meet with parents (Landsman 2004). Successful schools have a strong culture of reflection and development (OFSTED 2002a). They are eager to pilot new initiatives that may raise the achievement of their minority groups (Tikly et al. 2004). New ideas are assessed critically for their possible contribution to raising the achievement of the pupils and development of the school as a whole. They are prepared to challenge their assumptions on their policies and practices, or needs of the pupils, based on the findings from research, analysis of assessment, or other sources. They are open minded and prepared to listen to the views of the pupils, parents and the community.

Barriers to achievement

The pupils' barriers to achievement and their education needs are frequently presented as two sides of the coin. For example, for many immigrant minorities, language is both one of their major barriers and also their educational need. Findings from the literature suggest that there are common barriers to the achievement of some minority ethnic groups as well as barriers specific to individual ethnic groups; such as Bangladeshis, and Black Caribbeans. Some groups may have more difficulty than others, and some may be more successful (DfES 2006; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Lee 2002) (see previous section on *Disadvantaged socio-economic background*). Barriers that are repeatedly identified in most of the studies are summarized below (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Cline et al. 2002; CREDE 2003; Cunningham et al. 2004; DfES 2005a; Fitzgerald et al. 2000; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; OFSTED 2004a; Parsons et al. 2005; Tikly et al. 2004):

- (a) Various forms of racism by teachers, such as more severe punishment in school;
- (b) Low teacher expectation based on stereotyping, and pupils' underachievement not challenged;
- (c) Unsatisfactory teacher-pupil relationship;
- (d) Race-related bullying in the form of hurtful name calling and verbal abuse;
- (e) Disadvantaged socio-economic background of pupils;
- (f) Lack of language skills;
- (g) A substandard curriculum, and taught by weaker teachers;
- (h) Teachers' lack of relevant training, e.g. in multicultural education or teaching of English as an additional language;
- (i) Peer pressure of pupils not to succeed;
- (j) Temporary and permanent exclusion;
- (k) Parents' lack of knowledge of the education system and language (English) to support pupils' learning.

Among them, language as one of the major barriers to achievement for pupils from

minority ethnic origins has been repeatedly reported (e.g. CREDE 2003; Cunningham et al. 2004; OFSTED 2004a). Another major barrier identified is the lack of parental support (Cunningham et al. 2004). These barriers may bear significance to the Nepalese pupils' achievement in Hong Kong.

Good practices in schools

The majority of schools successful in raising their minority pupils' achievement are engaged in a blend of multiple approaches (Henze & ARC 2000; OFSTED 1999). The list below summarizes the strategies commonly adopted by primary schools in the U.K. (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Blair et al. 1998; Cline et al. 2002; Cunningham et al. 2004; OFSTED 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2004a, 2004b; Parsons et al. 2005; Tikly et al. 2002, 2004). Some of the strategies are likely to be applicable to schools in Hong Kong. With careful modification and planning, good practices may to a certain extent be transferable between different schools with different intakes and in different contexts (Blair 1998).

- (a) Strong and committed leadership on equal opportunities and raising of pupil achievement by the headteacher;
- (b) Clear school policy that respects equality and against racist bullying and harassment;
- (c) Careful selection of quality teachers: Teachers' personal attitudes and the classroom atmosphere are influential in delivering the message of equality (Banks 2002; Cunningham et al. 2004);
- (d) A positive culture of high expectation of pupils;
- (e) Effective teaching and learning for all groups of pupils;
- (f) A rich curriculum with out-of-school activities that target the holistic development of pupils;
- (g) Sensitivity to the identity of pupils and efforts to include their culture and language in the curriculum;
- (h) Clear systems of monitoring of achievement data by ethnicity for planning and to ensure different groups achieve equally;

- (i) Setting challenging targets for individual pupils and monitoring their progress;
- (j) Language support programmes and the use of mentoring system;
- (k) Support of bilingual teaching assistants;
- (l) Focus on attendance and prevention of exclusion;
- (m) Involving parents to support the learning of the pupils and maintaining links with the minority communities;
- (n) Willingness to take on new initiatives of the school as a whole, with regular reflection for continuous school improvement (a learning school).

Schools do not adopt all of the practices which are identified as effective (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Cunningham et al. 2004; OFSTED 2004b), nor is there one single best practice. Individual schools adopt practices that address the barriers in their particular situations, and that they find effective. Implementation of these practices is in itself a process of learning.

Immigrant and involuntary minorities

Studies have found that minority ethnic pupils' immigrant status has a psychological impact that significantly affects their effort and school achievement (Gibson & Ogbu 1991; Ogbu 1991). Gibson and Ogbu distinguish between immigrant and involuntary minorities. Both groups may experience prejudice and discrimination in the mainstream society. They may have to take up menial jobs, are underpaid, given inferior education, and excluded from true assimilation into the mainstream society, but immigrant minorities are generally more positive about their situation, and their children work harder in schools.

Immigrant minorities have usually moved to the present society in search of a better economic future or greater political freedom. They tend to compare their present situation with their peers in their home country. They also see their present situation as temporary and will improve. Education plays a major role for their children to improve their social situation. They encourage their children to study hard but may be unable to assist them

because they are unfamiliar with the local system, cannot speak the language or have little education themselves. They are more tolerant of prejudice and discrimination seeing themselves as strangers in a foreign land.

Involuntary minorities 'are people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest or colonization' (Ogbu 1991: 9). Examples are the Koreans in Japan and Maoris in New Zealand. Involuntary minorities usually perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as their undeserved oppression. They compare their present situation with the dominant group and consider that it requires more than individual effort to overcome their barriers in society.

As a result of the different perceptions, immigrant minorities usually see education as instrumental and would encourage their children to persevere in face of difficulties. Their children try to develop serious academic attitudes and behave in schools.

3.4 Factors related to minority pupils' achievement in the local context

The previous section discusses some of the major factors related to the achievement of minority ethnic pupils in other countries. This section explores these factors in the local context. The aim is to identify the extent of relevance and situation of these issues in Hong Kong.

Race prejudice and low expectations

In 2002, the EOC received 70 complaints related to racial discrimination, among them 12 were related to education (Government of the HKSAR 2003). The small number of complaint cases does not necessarily reflect the real situation because the ethnic minorities may be unaware of the channel (see also *Sections 2.5 and 3.5*).

A study on the adaptation and subjective well-being among South Asian youths in Hong Kong (Leung & Yan 2003) found a correlation between perceived racism and school achievement. In their study, lower perceived racism on the part of South Asian pupils predicted higher achievement test scores and school grades amongst this group. In the school review reports of the two primary schools that cater for minority ethnic pupils, the teachers' and the inspectors' expectations of the pupils' achievement were low (*Section 2.3*). In Ku et al.'s (2005) study, about one third of the respondents perceived teacher discrimination (see *Section 3.5* below). The impact of the effect of racism on achievement is felt in the long term. Pupils who encountered frequent racism may devalue schooling and consequently obtain poor school grades.

Disadvantaged socio-economic background

Data from the 2001 Census (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2001b) show that Nepalese as a group has low income and engage mainly in menial jobs (*Section 2.2*). A local study¹⁵ on the employment situation of minority ethnic people found that ethnic minorities are racially discriminated against in the job market (Working Group of SIP & Unison Hong Kong 2003). Compared to local workers, they have fewer chances to be employed and promoted. Their salary is lower, but their working hours are longer, the workload heavier and they are usually the first to be laid off.

Although socio-economic background is likely to correlate to achievement, it may not be easy to establish the correlation between the pupils' socio-economic background and other variables, including ethnicity in Hong Kong. There are no free-school-meal programmes for children from low income families, and because of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, schools have no information as to which pupil's family is receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). Besides, minority ethnic families may not be eligible for the CSSA¹⁶ or aware of its existence. If the EMB decides to

¹⁵ In this study, 268 (66.7%) out of the 402 respondents were Nepalese. 360 (89.6%) of respondents were males, and the mean age was 32.

¹⁶ Among other criteria, to be eligible for the CSSA, one needs to be a Hong Kong citizen and/or has resided in Hong Kong for at least 7 years.

collect data and monitor pupil achievement, it may model on value added and/or contextual value added methods employed by DfES (2006) (see *Section 3.3, Assessment, target setting and monitoring*).

The language issue

(See also the following section on *Curriculum* and *Section 3.5*)

In the EOC's Report on the Second Report of the Hong Kong SAR before the 34th Session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the EOC points out that 'many ethnic minority children face severe difficulties in schooling, especially Chinese, due to the language barrier. Moreover, they do not have adequate access to learn their own mother tongue languages' (2005a: paragraph 26). Other NGOs have similar findings (HK YWCA 2002; Unison online; Working Group of SIP & Unison Hong Kong 2003; YMMSS 2000, 2002). Chan (2005a) argued that the Chinese language barrier has caused the ethnic minorities to be trapped in a vicious cycle at the bottom of the social scale.

The government agree that language, especially Chinese is the minority ethnic children's major barrier to achievement (Government of the HKSAR 2004, 2005) but has repeatedly stated that their position is to integrate the ethnic minorities into the local community and the mainstream education, which would enable them to acquire a sound knowledge of Chinese and to compete on an equal basis for tertiary places and jobs in the future (ED 2001; Government of the HKSAR 2003, 2005). So, in order to help them 'integrate...into the local community' and 'compete on an equal basis' (Government of the HKSAR 2003: paragraph 13.25), the EMB has repeatedly refused to devise an alternative Chinese curriculum or syllabuses for second language learners in the public examinations (Clem 2006a; Li 2006d), although this is recommended by the EOC (2006).

According to the government (Government of the HKSAR 2003: paragraph 13.22, 13.24), most of the Nepalese who have arrived in Hong Kong since the mid-1990s, do not speak Chinese and many have no command of English. And although a small number of them

have attended mainstream schools and are able to speak Chinese, they have generally not acquired the skills of reading and writing. This shows that the EMB's rationale for not providing them with an alternative curriculum and syllabuses is not valid. The mainstream education has been ineffective for the Nepalese pupils, and they do not have the condition to 'compete on an equal basis'. On the other hand, the emphasis on Chinese as a major barrier provides a convenient explanation for the EMB and schools to justify why the Nepalese and other minority ethnic children underachieve.

Nepalese pupils in Hong Kong usually speak Nepali as their mother-tongue (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2000; Ku et al. 2005). Some have learnt Urdu and English in Nepal before coming to Hong Kong. They learn both English and Chinese as additional languages. Learning Chinese for Nepalese children is difficult because Nepali is an Indo-European language whose system is different from Chinese (Government of the HKSAR 2000). They are expected to feel more comfortable learning English. This assumption will be investigated in the case study schools.

A sample survey in 1999-2000 found that 79% of the Nepalese respondents (N=8,100) were unable to speak or write Chinese, and of the other 21% none claimed fluency (Census & Statistics Dept., HKSAR 2000). 94% of the Nepalese respondents could read and write English. Surprisingly, only 1% of the ethnic minorities indicated that they had encountered difficulty with education. The findings suggest that the Nepalese parents may be able to help their children with their English but are usually unable to help them with their Chinese school work.

Nepalese children do not necessarily come to Hong Kong at six years old to join primary one. When they arrive, they 'are of various ages and at different stages of their development' (Government of the HKSAR 2003: paragraph 13.24). The older they are, the more difficult it is for them to learn a new language (Chinese) and cope with the demands of learning other subjects through that language (Ovando 2004).

Moreover, Hong Kong's colonial past has its legacy in the perception of English as having a higher status than Chinese (Tse et al. 1995). This may affect Nepalese pupils' motivation to learn Chinese, which requires a lot of effort. For those who can communicate in English, they may not be sufficiently motivated to learn Chinese.

Identity and self-esteem

A study (Chan & Chan 2004) on newly arrived children from China (NAC) revealed that although they seem to have adapted very well to Hong Kong society, they have lower self-esteem than local children. The researchers suggest that these children may experience uncertainty and loss of cultural identity. Their uprooted social environment may affect their social life and confidence. They experience difficulty with learning English, of which the curriculum in China is often of a lower standard (more discussion of identity in the next session on *The school curriculum*). Another study (YMCA & Chan 1998) found NAC who were forced to study in lower levels might suffer emotional problems.

However, Leung and Yan (2003) reported that minority ethnic pupils in secondary school had higher levels of self-esteem compared with local pupils. The researchers attributed this to their comparatively better living environment than their compatriots in their home countries. Although about one third of the respondents were born in Hong Kong, it seems that they have adopted the 'immigrant minorities' perspective as described by Gibson and Ogbu (1991).

The school curriculum

To investigate the multicultural perspective of existing textbooks, the EOC (2000) has conducted a study on content analysis of 289 selected primary and secondary textbooks and examination papers. Although there is no evidence of racism or discrimination ethnic groups are 'very limited in their representation' (paragraph 8.4). In general, ethnicity is referred to a small degree (3.2% of all cases sampled). The only ethnic group

explicitly referred to is Caucasian. Most educational materials feature only Chinese, British, French and Americans. South Asians are not mentioned, although there are some 'visual depictions' (paragraph 5.4). The portrayal of non-Caucasian characters, for example, Africans, maintains traditional negative and positive stereotypes. This shows that the existing school curriculum is conservative and there is no evidence of development towards a multicultural curriculum that promotes knowledge and acceptance of diversity.

In Hong Kong primary schools, the curriculum is subject and textbook based. The four main subjects are Chinese, English, Mathematics and General Studies. There are other subjects like Arts and Crafts, Computer, Music and Physical Education. Teachers in Hong Kong have no relevant training in setting curriculum targets, designing curriculum or tailoring curriculum for second language learners, and there is no central curriculum or level standard for reference.

In Hong Kong, many minority ethnic pupils study school-developed curriculum of which the quality is not monitored. People from different sectors¹⁷ have urged the EMB to develop a Chinese curriculum and a school curriculum for non-Chinese learners (Clem 2006a, 2006b, 2006c) because the pupils need a high level of Cantonese to access the more sought after schools and pass public examinations essential for many jobs (SCMP 2006). Although the EMB maintains that individual schools can adapt the central curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils (EMB 2006a; Li 2006d), Law Yuk-kai, director of Hong Kong Rights Monitor disagreed. He said asking schools to adapt the curriculum for second-language learners, was similar to asking 'universities to adapt their curriculum for primary students' (Clem 2006b).

The focus of the 'nine-year basic education is to help pupils achieve an all-round personal development and to attain a basic level of competence in various aspects in preparation

¹⁷ 31 ethnic groups, concern groups, trade unions, non-governmental groups and professional bodies, including the Professional Teachers' Union, and 11 of the 16 non-official members of the Home Affairs Bureau's Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony signed an open letter addressed to the Chief Executive Donald Tsang to urge for an alternative Chinese curriculum for non-native speakers (2006c).

for life-long learning’ (EC 2000: paragraph 8.2.1). The government has confirmed that this ‘basic level of competence’ is defined with reference to one group of pupils – the local Chinese pupils: ‘the system was essentially geared to serving people who could speak and usually, read and write, Chinese’ (Government of the HKSAR 2005: paragraph 313). There is no consideration for pupils of other ethnic origins in the system and the curriculum. So, given that pupils from China experience uncertainty (Chan & Chan 2004) and may be forced to study below their level (YMCA & Chan 1998), the Nepalese and pupils from other ethnic origins are likely to encounter more difficulties.

The EMB’s continual refusal to develop a central curriculum (Clem 2006a; EMB 2006a) for non-Chinese pupils may be explained by Hong Kong’s political situation. The sovereignty of the territory was returned to China in 1997. After the transition, the ‘state’ is seen to take a more active stance in ‘creating a unified national identity’ (Morris & Morris 2001: 173). Since 1997, the Hong Kong government actively promotes social cohesion, harmony and Chinese values, as distinct from the colonial period. This can be illustrated in the central curriculum of which the recurrent themes are: ‘the promotion of traditional Chinese values, the avoidance of confrontation, a focus on the obligations and responsibilities of individuals towards the country and community, moral ‘correctness’ and a stress on societal values’ (ibid: 174). ‘Responsibility’ in terms of ‘citizenship’ and ‘national identity’ are two of the Seven Learning Goals. At this time when the EMB is introducing various significant education reforms and pursuing its political agenda, the development of a non-Chinese curriculum may be considered to be a diversion from its political aims.

Teachers and teaching

The Nepalese pupils in Hong Kong might not be taught by good, experienced teachers for reasons similar to those contended by Gillborn and Youdell (2000) (see *Section 3.2, Equal opportunity as equal share*). Schools are likely to deploy their good, experienced teachers to teach pupils who are well supported at home and from more advantaged backgrounds, as these pupils are more likely to achieve commendable results in the

public assessments (e.g. Pre-S1 HKAT). This would in turn help the schools to attract these kinds of pupils. Nepalese pupils and other disadvantaged children who are perceived to be unable to contribute much to raising the schools' reputation in this area, may be left with the weaker teachers.

Moreover, although the EMB promotes a mother-tongue teaching policy in primary and secondary schools, the teaching and learning of Chinese as a second language is not recognized as important. It is neither promoted nor researched.

The two pre-requisites of Chinese language teachers are their Chinese language proficiency and teaching skills. In Hong Kong many teachers are already teaching the language without a formal training in Chinese-teaching (Tse et al. 1995). Teaching Chinese as a second language to children entails special teaching and learning approaches and pedagogy. Because there is no specific training, any trained or untrained teacher can be assigned to teach non-Chinese pupils. Schools either develop their own curriculum or use existing textbooks for native speakers. There seems to be an assumption that no expertise is necessary in the teaching or curriculum development of Chinese because it is the teacher's mother-tongue.

Teachers' belief about learning influences their teaching approaches which in turn influences their pupils' learning styles. Chinese pupils in Hong Kong are observed to engage in learning styles that focus on repetitive learning and rote memory (Watkins 2000; Watkins & Biggs 2001). There is heavy pressure on working hard and achieving well in assessments. The pressure is intensified by teachers using blame to extract more effort from pupils. Nepalese pupils arriving Hong Kong may be alienated and discouraged by this teaching and learning culture.

Several local studies (Leung & Yan 2003; Loper 2001; YMMSS 2000) have recommended that more teachers from minority ethnic background should be employed by schools. However, even if the teacher training institutes exempted the Chinese entry requirement of the NCS applicants, they could only study to be an English teacher

because most other subjects are delivered in Chinese. This is not fair to the ethnic minorities. Their strengths and interests might be in Mathematics, Geography, Music or other subjects. Moreover, applicants to a teacher training programme need to possess an advanced level of academic achievement which is not easy according to the findings of the studies (see also *Section 6.1*).

Assessment, target setting and monitoring

As discussed in Chapter 2, results of the territory-wide assessments are only available to the senior management of individual schools. The reliability of teacher assessments in reflecting pupil achievement depends on individual school's monitoring system. The EMB has repeatedly refused to monitor minority achievement claiming equal treatment (Li 2005a). To this date, target setting on pupil achievement and school data on ethnicity are not required of primary and secondary schools¹⁸.

Target setting and recording of pupil achievement data is not new in Hong Kong. It was conducted for several years in the mid 1990s in primary schools. The EMB promoted a Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) initiative in which pupils progressed towards specified learning targets (Carless 2005). Assessment data was intended to feed back into the teaching and learning process. However, TOC became associated primarily with data recording, and teachers spent much time recording what pupils were 'able to do; partially able to do; and not yet able to do' (ibid.: 44) where the process ended. If target setting and monitoring of pupil achievement are to be successful, then some fundamental changes, such as reducing class size and providing relevant skills training to the teachers are needed.

Link with parents and parental support

In Hong Kong, most primary schools have their parent and teacher association (PTA).

¹⁸ Secondary schools are required to demonstrate value-addedness, but this is not required of primary schools. The data is confidential, and not open to the public.

The main function of the PTA is 'to facilitate two-way communication with schools' (Manzon 2004: 54). Although the extent of parental involvement differs from school to school, in general, 'Chinese parents have a high regard for schools and would rather play a subordinate role to school personnel; they also have little interest in school governance' (ibid). The Nepalese parents may be further deterred from involvement in the schools due to their language barrier, lack of knowledge about the education system, and long working hours. They may also have limited representation in the PTA for the same reasons.

On the other hand, parental involvement in their children's education can be defined as 'any form of support that parents give to their children, whether at home or in school, in order to contribute to the children's academic and social development' (ibid.: 12). This is expected to play a significant role in the children's success in schools, especially for immigrant children like the Nepalese in Hong Kong.

Social integration, racial bullying and peer group pressure

In Leung and Yan's study (2003) minority ethnic pupils who had Chinese friends reported lower rejection anxiety, and perceived less racial discrimination than those pupils who did not have Chinese friends. Unfortunately, 82% of the respondents in the study had no Chinese friends. The same phenomenon was observed in schools that admitted both Chinese and NCS pupils and schools that admitted only NCS pupils. In another study on minority ethnic children (HK YWCA 2002), 60% of the respondents reported that they had no Chinese friends. About 70% of the respondents reported unfriendly attitude of local people. In both studies, there were no questions that relate to peer group pressure on not succeeding in school.

Loper (2001) recommended that minority ethnic pupils should study in mainstream schools with local children to facilitate their integration into mainstream society. However, EOC believes that 'genuine integration could not be achieved merely by placing NCS children in mainstream schools' (2006: 1).

A learning school

Commitment to reflective learning and continuous improvement is essential in local schools because they have little experience in the education of the minority ethnic pupils. Based on Peter Senge's five disciplines of organizational learning¹⁹, Pang (2006) conducted a two-year study of twenty primary and secondary schools²⁰ in Hong Kong. For schools to become a learning school, Pang argued that it is essential to nurture 'a culture that encourages communication, support, trust and collective thinking' (ibid.: 19). The headteacher has an important role in promoting learning and managing change in their schools, but commitment of the whole school is crucial.

Values and leadership

The headteachers of all schools with or without minority ethnic pupils face problems and dilemmas in the management of their schools. Law et al. (2003) researched dilemmas faced by headteachers of 15 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, and discovered that Chinese cultural values underlie their leadership. The link between values and problems were moderated by value properties (e.g. perception of problems), personal and/or organizational characteristics. Personal characteristics include age, gender, experience and religious beliefs. The extent of autonomy enjoyed by the headteachers, such as control from the school management committee also affects their management of school problems.

Law et al. distinguished a typology that linked the values of the group of headteachers to how they perceived and managed problems in their schools, and five types of leadership were identified:

¹⁹ The five disciplines are: Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision, Team Learning and Systems Thinking.

²⁰ One of the primary schools in the study caters for both minority ethnic pupils and local Chinese pupils.

- (a) **Pacifists:** These headteachers subscribe more to the values of harmony, tolerance and submission.
- (b) **The progressive mentors:** Their main value feature is an inclination to implement extensive reforms in their schools and their commitment to empower their teachers for professional growth.
- (c) **The philosopher mentors:** They show a strong commitment for universally accepted principles of ethics.
- (d) **The pragmatists:** The predominant values of these headteachers include the values of consequences, utilitarianism, flexibility and market values. They see external reforms as opportunities for advancing preferred goals. They are not overly concerned with adhering to high ethical principles.
- (e) **The eclectics:** These headteachers do not have a strong attachment to any particular value cluster, except for the professional and consideration value clusters common to all types of headteachers.

The values of each of the leadership type is not in conflict with the inclusion of minority ethnic pupils in schools. However, the dominant values of the headteachers are expected to influence the schools' policies and practices towards the minority pupils, and how they perceive and manage related problems and dilemmas.

A safe school

The EMB collected data from all primary and secondary schools on physical bullying cases from September 2003 to February 2004 (Legislative Council Secretariat 2004). 72% of the schools reported nil cases; 23% reported one to three cases; and 5% reported four or more cases. According to their survey, physical bullying in schools is not serious.

The EMB's survey is not comprehensive or sufficiently informative. First, it focused solely on physical bullying. According to Cline et al.'s study (2002) the majority of race related harassment were name calling. Few cases of physical harassment were reported. Second, the survey did not correlate the data with school type, racial bullying, or socio-

economic background of school district. A focused survey on racial bullying may reveal a different picture.

Immigrant and involuntary minorities

The Nepalese in Hong Kong falls into the category of immigrant minorities. Since the economy in Hong Kong is more developed than Nepal, many Nepalese may have moved here in search of a better life. Moreover, with the escalating unrest in Nepal, Hong Kong is a comparatively safer place. Thus, the Nepalese pupils and their parents in the case study schools may exhibit characteristics of immigrant minorities (Gibson & Ogbu 1991). According to Gibson and Ogbu, the pupils are likely to be positive about their situation and future prospect, and motivated to work hard in schools. They may try to tolerate prejudice and discrimination as a consequence of their minority status.

3.5 Local studies on minority ethnic pupils' education

The issue of minority ethnic pupils' education has received attention in Hong Kong for the last few years. This section will discuss the findings of selected major local studies, most of which studied pupils in secondary schools. The studies (e.g. Ku et al. 2005; Leung & Yan 2003; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; YMMSS 2000, 2002) indicate that language, accessibility, limited school choice, adaptation, teacher attitude, curriculum, discrimination, and poor education quality of some schools are the major barriers to the children's achievement. The pupils' difficulties in learning have led to limited outlets after secondary schooling (Ku et al. 2005; Working Group of SIP & Unison Hong Kong 2003; YMMSS 2002). Their perceived limited education and employment prospects in turn, may have a negative backwash effect on their motivation to study (Leung & Yan 2003).

Education needs and social adaptation of ethnic minority youth in Hong Kong
(YMMSS 2000)

Many of the local studies build on the findings of the study conducted by Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service (YMMSS), a non-government social service provider. It is the first major study on minority ethnic pupils locally. Questionnaires were given to minority pupils from primary 5 to secondary 5 in six schools²¹ that mainly admit minority ethnic children. The questionnaires were in English but even with support from the researchers during administration of the questionnaires; only 593 out of 1105 returned questionnaires were usable for analysis. This suggests that the respondents may be unfamiliar with the format of questionnaires or their level of English was inadequate. Among the respondents, 12.1% were Nepalese. Interviews were conducted with pupils, parents, teachers, headteachers and social workers.

Major findings of the study include:

- (a) There were not enough school places and the pupils usually had to wait for a long time before being admitted into a school (within 6 months: 30.7%; 6 months to 1 year: 5.6%; over one year 15%).
- (b) 44.8% (or 266) respondents reported that they had difficulty making friends because of language problems.
- (c) 39.3% of the respondents had difficulty in school. The major difficulties quoted were: language (55%) and school social environment (27.6%). Almost one fifth of the respondents (19.2%) who reported difficulties in school said they were victims of bullying.

The study did not distinguish whether the bullying was physical, verbal or race related. As the schools mainly catered for minority ethnic pupils, it could be inter-racial bullying or peer pressure not to succeed in school or for other reasons. Further studies focused on bullying are needed to identify the real issues and tackle the problem.

²¹ 2 government primary, 1 aided primary, 1 government secondary and 2 bought-places secondary schools.

The significance of YMMSS's study can be seen in that a number of its recommendations have been adopted by the government since 2002. These include:

- (a) The Guide to the Services in Hong Kong used to provide solely for new arrivals from China are also provided in the minority languages;
- (b) Formal opening up of the public education system to the minorities;
- (c) Expanding the existing funding system and bridging programmes for Newly Arrived Children from China to include non-Chinese children;
- (d) Establishment of a specific department to cater for issues related to minorities in the government²².

A study on Outlets of the South Asian Ethnic Minority Youth in Hong Kong
(YMMSS 2002)

In 2002, YMMSS published another research study which explored the South Asian pupils' perception of their prospects after secondary school. The major barriers were perceived to be language, racial discrimination, and insufficient assistance given to them. Only about three quarters of the respondents were optimistic about their study opportunities after secondary school. When evaluating their opportunities in obtaining employment, most pupils believed the major barrier was language (45.9%), followed by racial discrimination (19.4%).

Race and equality: a study of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong's education system
(Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004)

Another major local study on the education of ethnic minorities was conducted by Loper and Unison Hong Kong. The researchers interviewed 10 pupils and 6 parents/relatives of other minority pupils in 2003. The study discovered that the issues of language and lack

²² The Race Relations Unit established under the Home Affairs Bureau, is tasked to improve the Government's services to the ethnic minorities. It commenced operation in June 2002.

of school choices identified in previous research (Leung & Yan 2003; Loper 2001; YMMSS 2000, 2002) had not been adequately tackled by the EMB. Based on the findings, they concluded that the ethnic minorities suffered from indirect discrimination. The main barriers encountered by the minority children include:

- (a) Difficulty obtaining information about the education system and school placement system;
- (b) Limited choice of schools;
- (c) Relatively low quality of available educational institutions;
- (d) Language of instruction in schools being the major barrier to their achievement;
- (e) Shortage of opportunities to learn spoken Cantonese and written Chinese for them to compete effectively in the job market; and
- (f) Lack of interaction with Chinese pupils.

The findings of this study have significantly informed the present case study and the design of the interview questions, which include access to information, school choices, quality of schools, and language of instruction. Some of the major barriers identified in Loper's study are discussed below. These are: indirect discrimination, access to information, access and participation, and poor quality of schools.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination is unlawful in Hong Kong (HAB 2004; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; Rajwani 2004). Under the Race Discrimination Bill to be introduced in Hong Kong, it is proposed that

‘a person should be regarded as indirectly discriminating against another person if he applies to that other person a requirement or condition which he applies or would apply to persons not of the same racial or ethnic group as that other person but – (a) which is such that the proportion of persons of the same racial or ethnic group as that other person who can comply with it is considerably smaller than the

proportion of persons not of that racial or ethnic group who can comply with it; (b) which he cannot show to be justifiable irrespective of the race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin of the person to whom it is applied; and (c) which is to the detriment of that other person because he cannot comply with it.'

(HAB 2004: paragraph 36)

Loper and Unison Hong Kong contend that the government's mother-tongue teaching policy in secondary school in effect discriminates against certain ethnic groups and constitutes a form of indirect discrimination. The term mother-tongue implies that pupils in Hong Kong all have the same mother-tongue (Cantonese), which is not necessarily the case for children from China and NCS children.

An example illustrating indirect discrimination is the Secondary School Places Allocation system (ibid.). Until 1998 most secondary schools in Hong Kong used English as the medium of instruction. In September 1998, the EMB introduced a major policy that emphasizes the educational benefits of teaching in the children's mother-tongue – Chinese (Cantonese). Consequently only about one-fourth of the secondary schools (114 out of 501 in 2004/05) are allowed to use English as the medium of instruction (EMI) while the rest have to switch to using Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI).

The competition to be admitted into EMI schools is very keen, and requires a high level of academic achievement that includes Chinese. EMI schools are reluctant to admit ethnic minorities because they would bring down the schools' public examination results in Chinese (Forestier 2005). So minority ethnic pupils have to attend either CMI schools or the secondary schools that specifically cater for them. In CMI schools, the minority ethnic pupils' low standard of Chinese makes it impossible for them to learn effectively when every subject, sometimes including English is taught in Chinese.

The mother-tongue teaching policy does not directly discriminate against the ethnic minorities. However it has failed to consider its effect on non-Chinese pupils. All pupils seem to have equal opportunity to access the EMI schools, but the access criteria have

made it difficult for non-Chinese pupils to comply with. Equal treatment (Arora 2005) has not ensured equal opportunity for the minority pupils in their access to secondary schools.

Access to information

Loper and Unison Hong Kong and other researchers (e.g. Ku et al. 2005; Hong Kong Christian Service 2006; HK YWCA 2002) have found that many newly-arrived minority ethnic parents as well as those who have been in Hong Kong for a couple of years do not have adequate access to information about the education system, schools, community resources, and cannot find the information they need in English. Lack of access to information also leads to some school-aged pupils staying at home (see next section on *Access and participation*). Parents tend to rely on their friends, relatives and employers for information (Government of the HKSAR 2000). The playground/parks are usual sources for information where the children learn from other children and bring home (HK YWCA 2002).

The information provided on the EMB website is not adequately informative. There is a general impression that the schools on the pages of 'Education for Non-Chinese Children' are the only schools that admit ethnic minorities (Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004). It was not until the January 2005 update of the website that it explicitly stated that minority ethnic children could apply to any government and aided primary and secondary schools other than those on the list.

Basic information of all primary and secondary schools on the EMB website was only available in Chinese for many years. Mirror school information in English did not appear until the summer of 2006. At the school level, few schools maintain an English website. Education is a right of children and yet parents are denied of the opportunity to make informed decisions on the schools for their children. When the schools' profiles are in Chinese, unless the parents can read Chinese, it does not provide them with any information.

Parents who cannot read or speak English and those who have no access to the internet are likely to experience immense difficulty and frustration when seeking information about the education system. The EMB seems to nurture the assumption that information provided on their website equates to informing the public. In practice, low income families seldom have access to a computer or the internet²³.

Even secondary school pupils are ignorant about important educational information related to them. 50.1% of the pupils in YMMSS's study (2000) did not know there was a travel subsidy available to them. About one fourth of the pupils in Ku et al.'s study (2005) have inadequate knowledge about the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), and the requirements for studying secondary 6 (see Ku et al.'s study below). Schools are an important source of information for the minority families but this function seems to be inadequately utilized. Some of the teachers may not have been sensitive to their needs and in providing assistance. This suggests racial discrimination of some teachers in the form of passive behaviour.

Access and participation

Difficulty with access to schools was identified in YMMSS's study in 2000 but has not improved four years later (Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004). Most respondents in the two studies had waited at home for one to two years before they were admitted to a school²⁴. A separate survey of 20,000 South Asian youths found 40% of them had waited for 6 to 12 months before being allocated a school (Legislative Council Secretariat 2006). This would not have been allowed to happen if they were local Chinese children.

²³ Since June 2005, the government has launched two half-hour radio programmes in Urdu and Nepali weekly. Nepalese families are expected to be better informed.

²⁴ More schools may be willing to accept minority ethnic pupils due to the continuous drop of school aged pupils (Cheung & Wong 2006).

The government is aware of the lack of schooling of some children. They suggest the parents are personally responsible for the problem (Education Department 2001: paragraph 6; Government of the HKSAR 2003: paragraph 13.28):

- (a) The parents are working and have little time to take care of their children;
- (b) Some non-Chinese parents are unwilling to allow their children to study in mainstream schools; and
- (c) Some newly-arrived non-Chinese parents, particularly those who can speak neither English nor Chinese, are unaware of the law, the local education system or the procedures of securing a school place for their child.

The EMB has the legal responsibility to ensure that all school-aged children are in schools. But instead of making the effort to reach out to these needy families, they have chosen to blame the victims. The EMB has not explained why those pupils whose parents had approached them for help, but still had waited at home for months before they were allocated a school place.

Poor quality of schools

An interviewee in Loper and Unison Hong Kong's study reported that in their primary school, the pupils were constantly getting into trouble with the police. Another respondent reported there was a gang in his secondary school. Some pupils complained that the classrooms were noisy. In the government secondary school, the passing rate of the pupils in the HKCEE was consistently low. In Ku et al.'s study (see next section), a significant proportion of respondents reported drug abuse and bullying in their schools.

The quality of education provided by schools that cater for minority ethnic pupils varies, but a combination of discipline problems, low teacher expectation, language barriers, and relatively limited choice of schools would inevitably impact on the pupils' achievement and constrain their opportunity for further education. This suggests that the opening of

the system alone is insufficient. Other accompanying problems need to be recognized and properly addressed for equality of outcome to be achieved.

A Research Report on the Education of South Asian Ethnic Minority Groups in Hong Kong (Ku, H. B., Chan, K. W. & Sandhu, K. K. 2005)

Another recent survey on minority ethnic pupils in secondary schools was conducted by Ku et al. from 2003 to 2005. 50 out of 200 respondents in this study were Nepalese. According to the findings, social integration with local children continues to be unsatisfactory. The pupils reported discrimination by teachers and poor discipline in their schools. However, most pupils remained positive and did not suffer from low self-esteem. According to Verkuyten (1998), perceived group discrimination is related to ethnic self-esteem, but not to personal self-esteem. Bullying was an issue but as in YMMSS's study (2000), the survey did not correlate bullying with peer pressure not to succeed:

- (a) 27% of the pupils felt that some of their teachers punished minority ethnic pupils more severely than Chinese pupils;
- (b) 30% of the pupils thought some of their teachers disliked teaching them;
- (c) 43% of the pupils reported they seldom had the opportunity to communicate with their Chinese classmates;
- (d) 20.5% of the pupils felt their Chinese schoolmates disliked them because of their race or ethnic origin;
- (e) 32.5% of the pupils reported drug abuse among pupils in their school;
- (f) 43.5% of the pupils considered bullying among pupils to be a problem in their school; and
- (g) 82% of the pupils believed in working hard in school and 56.5% pupils believed they would complete university level.

Ku et al.'s study was published after the field study of this case study was completed. Although their subjects were in secondary schools, there are similar findings in Ku et al's

study and the present study. For example, different levels of racial discrimination from the teachers and their Chinese classmates are reported. The pupils seldom have the opportunity to communicate with their Chinese classmates. Most pupils believe in working hard in school and are positive about the future.

Education needs of the Nepalese pupils in Hong Kong

To summarize, the education needs of the Nepalese pupils identified in the local literature include but are not limited to language needs, access to information, good quality schools, and a safe and supportive school environment with positive social relationship.

3.6 Learning Chinese in Hong Kong schools for minority ethnic pupils

There are two different approaches in the teaching and learning of Chinese in schools, and this determines the curriculum and required level of competence of the learners. One is using Chinese as the medium or tool for learning other subjects and achieving other learning goals in formal education. This is the situation in mainstream primary schools and CMI secondary schools. The pupils need a native-speaker level of Chinese to learn effectively.

Another approach is the learning of Chinese as one of the school subjects. In EMI schools and schools that cater for minority ethnic pupils, all other subjects, except Chinese are taught in English. The time spent on learning Chinese is comparatively little. In schools that cater for the minority ethnic pupils, Chinese is not necessarily offered at all levels (Ku et al. 2005; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004).

In Hong Kong, Chinese refers to Cantonese in general. In Hong Kong, most Chinese people speak Cantonese (95%) (Government of the HKSAR 2005), which is a dialect spoken in some parts of southern China. Putonghua (also known as Mandarin) is the national language, and is taught as a subject in schools. For headteachers, they have the

dilemma about whether to teach the minority pupils Cantonese or Putonghua. Some schools teach both. Cantonese is the language that would help the pupils make friends, study, find a job and integrate into Hong Kong society, not Putonghua. However, Putonghua is the national language and will be useful when the pupils leave Hong Kong.

Chinese is difficult for second language learners for a number of reasons. First, Chinese in the spoken form is a tonal language. Cantonese has nine tones; each slightly raised or lowered from the next. Putonghua has four tones and an official phonetic system (known as 'pinyin') so it may be easier for foreigners to learn than Cantonese. Second, Chinese can be read from left to right, right to left and top to down.

'In most other languages, the written form has evolved to record the established spoken language' (Finch 2005a). According to Finch, the Chinese written language (classical Chinese), was originally used to record official documents and literature of the mandarins and elites, and bore no resemblance to the many spoken languages or dialects which were allowed to develop separately for hundreds of years. The dialect of Beijing – Putonghua was adopted as the national language in the 20th century. The spoken and written forms of Putonghua are similar in structure and vocabulary.

Chinese in the written form is a pictogram language. There are no alphabets like most other European languages, and often requires a different learning style from the minority ethnic learners' first language. Chinese has no explicit grammar rules and tenses. Depending on the context, most characters or 'words' can function as a verb, noun, adjective, or adverb (Finch 2005a). Characters or 'words' in Chinese usually obtain their meanings through combination with another character or characters and they can mean entirely different things, depending on the combination and the context. Chinese has a huge number of homophones; that is, different characters have the same pronunciation (Finch 2005b). So, a correctly pronounced sound does not, by itself, allow the listener to comprehend which character is being used. One also needs to deduce the character from the context.

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, Chinese is written in the traditional form; whereas in China and Singapore, a simplified version of written Chinese is used. A second language learner who has learnt to read and write Chinese in Hong Kong, would have difficulty reading literature published in China.

For learners of Chinese in Hong Kong, the task is more than learning to speak two Chinese languages (Cantonese and Putonghua) and writing one. It also involves the complex task of translating between spoken Cantonese into written Chinese and vice versa. If that does not seem daunting enough, it should be remembered that Cantonese is a spoken language and has different sentence structures and vocabulary from the written language.

3.7 Implication for research

There are a number of limitations on existing literature in Hong Kong. First, the issue is under-researched. Second, there have been significant changes during the last few years (see *Section 2.5*), and some findings identified in earlier studies may no longer be relevant, and needed to be brought up-to-date. For example, pupils' access to schools (Loper & Unison HK 2004) may have improved since the formal opening of the system to them.

Third, the subjects of most local research are on pupils in secondary schools (e.g. YMMSS 2002; Loper & Unison 2004). Many minority children begin their education in primary. It would be useful to study the parents and the children's perception, experience and needs at this stage, as well as the schools' supportive strategies.

The government's supportive mechanisms are designed to support the minority ethnic pupils' as a group -- the South Asians, without consideration of inter-ethnic differences, their diverse culture and needs. Statistics (Census & Statistics Dept. HKSAR 2000, 2001b) have shown that there are basic differences in age structure, education attainment,

occupation, income, and language competence among the minority groups. In order to formulate plans that can better cater for them, studies on the educational needs and barriers to achievement of separate ethnic groups are necessary.

Fifth, in international literature, minority ethnic pupils encounter various barriers in their school achievement, but in Hong Kong, the EMB seems to identify language as the single major barrier to their achievement. This suggests that their supportive mechanisms (see *Section 2.5*) may be limited in scope. Finally, local research to date has not studied the schools' strategies to support these children. What examples of good practice for raising the achievement of pupils of Nepalese origin and for meeting their needs are there?

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter relates the methodology of this study. It describes the research design, development of the instruments, the sampling, the study process, the ethical considerations, limitations and difficulties encountered in the process.

4.2 Research design and methodology

This study is designed as a two-case case study (Yin 2003). It aims to explore the issues relating to the achievement of Nepalese pupils in aided primary schools in Hong Kong. The major method of data collection is through semi-structured interviews with 3 groups of respondents: the headteachers/teachers, Nepalese pupils and parents to understand their views and personal experience. A case study is considered appropriate for this study as the research questions require elaborated answers that it is more appropriate to obtain through face-to-face interviews. There are a considerable number of areas that respondents were required to explain. For example, how the school supports the children's learning, as well as the rationale and beliefs behind actions. It was intended to conduct focus group interviews to provide the respondents with a chance to discuss ideas and to help the researcher to deepen understanding on related issues. In practice, however, it became possible only to conduct such interviews with the pupils.

Case studies could be qualitative and quantitative in nature, but in this case, are being used as part of a qualitative method. The case study was not combined with questionnaires in the two schools. There are a few considerations that contribute to this decision. One reason is that the pupils are in primary and would have difficulty understanding and completing a questionnaire. According to a report (Government of the HKSAR 2000), many Nepalese people's level of English was not strong. So, the parents may not understand the questions adequately and may have difficulty responding to the

questions in a self-administrated questionnaire, and thus resulting in a small percentage of usable questionnaires. Since all the parents, pupils and teachers would be invited to participate in the interviews, the interviews may be considered a repeat of what is asked in the questionnaire and time consuming, and so deter some potential participants from participating in the interview. Interviews are considered more relevant because the issues need to be probed and explored, and questionnaires are not as helpful as interviews for this purpose.

This study is built on the findings related to minority ethnic pupils' achievement from local and international research discussed in Chapter 3, which guided data collection and analysis (Yin 2003). The discussion and analysis of the data follow from the research questions and the theoretical framework. Results of this study will show whether and to what extent the barriers to achievement and education needs of minority ethnic pupils and school practices identified in previous research, both local and in other countries, apply to the Nepalese pupils and the schools.

It is recognized that every school exists in a different context; and their resources and constraints vary (Henze & ARC 2000). Although the Nepalese pupils and the schools exist in the same macro-contexts, the administrative and supportive strategies and the ethnic mix of the pupils in the two schools differ. The case study hopes to provide rich contextualized data that policy makers and practitioners may find relevant to their own contexts.

The two schools were each visited for two days near the end of the second term of 2004/05. As the headteachers, the teachers and almost all the Nepalese pupils had participated in the interviews during the two days, it was considered unnecessary to extend the visits. The interviews were conducted in the schools. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researcher with the 2 headteachers, 8 teachers, 3 teaching assistants, 19 pupils, and 7 parents. The age of the pupils ranged from 8 to 14. Two of the interviews with the parents were conducted through the school's translator. Interviews with another 5 parents of one school were conducted telephonically by the Nepalese teaching assistant using the same instrument that was used to interview the

other parents. The teaching assistant who undertook the interviews with these parents understood the instrument and had attended some of the interviews with the pupils.

A significant part of the study is on the government's policy on minority ethnic education. Information on policy matters is collected from government sources, such as Legislative Council papers (e.g. Legislative Council Secretariat 2006), press releases (e.g. Li 2006A), and the EMB website (e.g. pages on Education Services for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) students). These official documents provide information on the position of the government on minority education and on the development of the government's minority policies.

Newspaper articles provide a rich resource of non-official data. They are used to provide data to supplement the primary resource and to provide some balance to the official statements. An example is the comment made by Legislator Yeung Sum on the lack of official statistics of the ethnic minorities (see *Section 3.2, Equal treatment as equal access*).

4.3 Sampling

Two primary schools with different pupil population sizes and situated in different districts participated in this study. Both schools started admitting minority ethnic pupils during the 2002-03 school year. The schools were not chosen by random or chosen for the purpose of comparison. They were chosen purposefully because of their similarities and differences. The purpose is to balance and achieve variety with the aim to maximize learning (Stake 1995). The data obtained from the different contexts is expected to provide complementary findings (Yin 2003). The criteria used for selection of the two schools were:

- (a) They are aided primary schools²⁵.
- (b) The schools follow the local system and mainstream curriculum.
- (c) They are of different pupil population size, and are located in two different districts.
- (d) They have a significant number of minority ethnic pupils as well as local Chinese pupils.

Although the schools did fit the above criteria, one of them was also chosen on the basis of convenience; i.e. School A was recruited through a headteacher known to the researcher. It was not on the EMB's list of schools suggested for NCS pupils. After hearing about the study and the search for the case study schools, the headteacher suggested that School A would be a suitable school. It had participated in a few studies in the past, and was quite open minded. As the school's information on their website showed it to be suitable, the school was invited to participate in the research.

School B was selected from the EMB's list²⁶, partly because it had a significant number of local as well as minority ethnic pupils, and partly because it had a bilingual website which showed conscious effort to cater for the non-Chinese. Information on the school's website suggested it had a different context and might be a good case to complement School A. Both headteachers agreed to participate in the study although the headteacher of School B had some reservations (see *Section 4.6*).

²⁵ The two government primary schools with significant number of minority ethnic pupils were considered unsuitable because they admitted only NCS pupils, and did not fit with the purpose of this study.

²⁶ There were 4 aided primary schools that had significant numbers of NCS pupils on the EMB's list at that time. School A was not on the list, and was selected for the reasons mentioned above. School B was identified as the first priority among the 4 on the list. The other three schools were eliminated for the following reasons. One of the schools had a new headteacher who might feel uncomfortable to participate in research, and so this school was eliminated. One had a relatively smaller number of both local and minority pupils compared with the first two schools, and was eliminated for this reason; whilst the website of the third school was inaccessible. (This school was inspected a few months later and severely accused by the EMB for poor administration and quality of education (QAD 2006). See *Section 2.3* on *Achievement of minority ethnic pupils* for details.) Only the 1st and 2nd school had an English website.

School A²⁷ had 5 classes, from primary two to six. It had a pupil population of 72 of which 23 were Nepalese. There were a few pupils from other ethnic origins. The rest were Chinese. Some of the Chinese pupils lived across the border in mainland China, and crossed the border to attend school every day. They were born in Hong Kong and had right of access to public education. The pupils from different ethnic origins studied together in the same classes.

School B had a pupil population of 740; among them 302 were NCS pupils. There were 33 Nepalese from primary one to six. The school operated an English stream for its NCS pupils. In some classes where there were not enough NCS pupils, the NCS pupils and the Chinese were put in the same class. That means, the NCS pupils and the Chinese pupils studied in the same school but did not necessarily study together. At the time of study, there were already more NCS pupils than Chinese pupils in primary one, and the headteacher expected its NCS pupil population to overtake its Chinese pupil population in a few years.

4.4 Research instrument

The interview instruments were semi-structured, with both closed and open-ended questions. It included prompts and probes to be used during the interview. The closed questions elicit basic information such as teaching experience, occupation, and years in Hong Kong. The semi-structured format ensures that the basic questions were covered while allowing space for the informants to express themselves (Wragg 1984). This arrangement was particularly useful during the interviews with the headteachers and teachers when the initial questions allow them to determine and elaborate on the answers.

The instruments were developed using findings in the literature (Youngman 1984), both local and in other countries, as a starting point. Local literature suggests that the minority

²⁷ School A was closed a year after this study, after a long battle with the EMB to stay open. It could not meet the minimum pupil requirement in primary one in 2003.

ethnic pupils' barriers to achievement include lack of language skills (both English and Chinese), difficulty with language of instruction, insufficient school places, difficulty with school adaptation, lack of interaction with local pupils, and unsatisfactory quality of education provided by some schools (Government of the HKSAR 2001, 2004, 2005; Loper 2001; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; YMCA HK & Chan 1998; YMMSS 2000, 2002). Other indirect barriers to achievement include limited choice of schools, lack of information about the education system and the subsidies available to them. The pupils experience indirect discrimination in the form of the lack of chances to learn Chinese and the Chinese taught in schools is too easy and not useful (Loper 2001; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004). There is possible race prejudice in the form of racial bullying and teacher stereotype (Rajwani 2004; Leung & Yan 2003). Among the barriers identified, language is repeatedly considered as the most important barrier that may be the root to some other barriers such as limited school choice.

The instruments of a similar study by Tikly et al. (2004) on the barriers to achievement of pupils from mixed heritage background in the UK were used as the basic framework for the instruments. The questions were modified and adapted in accordance to the findings in local literature, especially Loper and Unison Hong Kong's study (2004) which was the most recent at the time, as well as the researcher's personal experience. There were 3 instruments, one for each group of subjects: the headteacher/teachers, the parents and the pupils.

After the instruments were developed, they were piloted with a headteacher of a school with NCS pupils, a teacher in the school, an Indian parent and her daughter. These were selected using convenience sampling. The parent and daughter were recruited through a teacher after a period of unsuccessful search. It was an unsatisfactory arrangement to have an Indian parent and daughter but time was running out before the scheduled interviews. A second pilot with a Nepalese pair was intended but had to be given up because the search was unsuccessful. It turned out that the parent's English competence was much stronger than the respondents in the study. It was noted that the parent and

daughter in the pilot were uncomfortable with the questions on discrimination. Special care was taken during the actual interviews when asking questions on discrimination.

The instruments were modified after the pilot. For example questions related to bullying in the pupils' questionnaire were deleted, such as 'Do people get bullied or called names in this school because of their background?' The issue of bullying was discussed only when the children were more mature. Other questions were added to the pupils' questionnaire, such as 'Tell me something about you' because it was felt that the children needed some time to relax and it would provide general information of the children that may be useful. For the parents' questionnaire, a number of questions were added, such as 'Is it important for your child to learn English and Chinese? Why?' and 'What is their (your children's) major difficulty?' The questions were then read and commented on by a teacher who taught NCS pupils. Before the school visits, the instruments were further modified with information obtained from the headteachers. For example, this question was added to the parents' questionnaire 'Are school fees a problem if you have to pay?'

4.5 Data collection

There were several telephone conversations with the headteachers and Nepalese assistant to obtain background information and discussing and clarifying related issues before and after the school visits. Information obtained from the telephone conversations were written down and kept on file and used to modify the questions and aided interpretation of data. Except for the telephone interviews with the 5 parents, all interviews were conducted in the schools. During the visits, an effort was made not to interfere with the schools' normal activities (Stake 1995) or put pressure on the teachers.

The interviews were not transcribed in full (Nisbet & Watt 1984) partly because several languages were used in the interview process. Most of the pupils' and the two minority teaching assistants' responses were transcribed in full as the interviews were more condensed and conducted in English. The parents' responses were transcribed as fully as

possible, because at times their responses were not clear. The headteachers and the teachers' discussion were conducted in Chinese, and notes were written in either English or Chinese. Responses that were considered significant at the time were written in full in either English or Chinese during the interviews. Although the interview notes were translated or written out afterwards, the focus in some areas was on correct recording and understanding of their responses rather than verbatim recordings. This happened with issues such as the schools' different administrative strategies. Impressions and reflections were added in on the same day or the following day when the memory was still fresh.

The framework of the questionnaire helped to keep the interviews in focus. Nonetheless, there was scope for the broad themes to be developed and refined iteratively in relation to whatever insights emerged from the data. In one case, for example, the teacher mentioned a girl who had studied in the school for a few months and required much support because she could not speak Chinese and had very little English. Further probing revealed that the girl's father was often unemployed, and basic needs such as food, water and soap were lacking. Low socio-economic status of minority families is often pointed out as a significant barrier to pupils' achievement, but specific conditions such as having no soap or hot water for shower illustrates a vivid picture of the extent of the family's poverty.

There were several languages involved in the interviews. Interviews with the two minority ethnic teaching assistants were conducted in English. The interviews with the headteachers and the teachers were conducted in Chinese. Face-to-face interviews with the parents were conducted in English with some Nepali bilingual translation. The telephone interviews were conducted in Nepali and later translated back into English.

Language did not cause much difficulty during the interviews with the pupils. A 14-year-old boy who had been in Hong Kong for 7 years chose Chinese for the interview language. The others chose English. The questions in the instrument were adjusted for individual pupil's level of English. Pupils from the same class do not necessarily possess

the same level of language competence. With pupils whose English was very weak, the interview was mostly a question-answer interaction.

In School A, interviews with pupils were conducted with a teacher in the background. In School B, the Nepalese teaching assistant attended the interviews and provided some bilingual language support. Interviews with the pupils were arranged by the schools depending on their timetable, so pupils from the same class usually participated in an interview together. Interviews with pupils ranged from one-to-one to group interviews of three pupils. Interview time usually lasted about 20 to 40 minutes depending on the size of the group, age of the pupils and their readiness to talk. There was some discussion and exchanges among the pupils in the focus group interviews. The interviews with the pupils were informal, although notes were taken in front of them. At times, two or three children would be talking together on something they found interesting, such as comparing the importance of English and Chinese. Permission to record the pupils' interviews was obtained but after one attempt was abandoned. The pupils were excited and constant attention was directed to the recorder.

Interviews with the headteachers and teachers were conducted on one-to-one basis. The headteachers were interviewed in their offices. There were two in-depth interviews with each headteacher that lasted about two hours each. Only the headteachers' interviews were recorded on tape. Recording releases the burden of note-taking during the interview, helps with the transcribing afterwards, and can provide authentic quotations to illustrate findings (Silverman 1993). Interviews with the teachers lasted half hour to 45 minutes. These were not recorded. The decision is made because the researcher was an outsider and had not built up a prior relationship with the teachers. Recording the interviews might lead to reservation in their responses.

Interviews with the parents in School A were on a one-to-one basis, in pairs, or one-to-one with the translator, as they came to the school at different times during the two days. Interview time with the parents usually lasted around 20 minutes, slightly extended for two-parent interviews. The men spoke English better than the women on average. When

interviewed in pairs, the person with the stronger English helped with some bilingual translation. There was some discussion between the parents in their mother tongue at times but these exchanges were usually not translated back in full. The interviews with the parents were not recorded. For the parents, the researcher was an outsider of a different ethnicity and from the mainstream culture. Recording the interview might put some parents on the defensive and affect their responses. Additional information such as body language, tone of voice and parents' attire, was noted down in the research diary to aid interpretation of data.

Two full Chinese lessons were observed in School B. They were arranged by the headteacher. Chinese lessons were selected as the focus of observation as the learning of Chinese is a major concern of their education in Hong Kong. The classroom interaction, learning materials, teaching and learning provide direct information for the study and help with the interpretation of the data (see *Chapter 5*).

Other forms of data collection include documentary data (Punch 2005). This includes the annual plans, curriculum plans, plan for the Capacity Enhancement Scheme Grant, information from school website, project reports on cultural visits, children's textbooks and workbooks. These kinds of information help to triangulate the data collected and ensure their authenticity. For example, displays in the schools provided no evidence that the schools were promoting multicultural education in their curriculum and daily practices. The textbooks, written work, take-home tasks, and learning materials of different pupils provided useful data for the triangulation of the reports from the 3 groups of participants on their achievement. Information obtained from the school websites provided basic information about the schools' activities and development plans so the time spent in schools could be used more productively and can be more focused.

School administrative documents, such as the School Development and Annual plans, plans for the Capacity Enhancement Grant (CEG) showed that the schools had taken the NCS pupils into consideration when formulating their plans. For example, in both schools the provision of a Chinese school-based curriculum was one of the major

concerns, and a significant proportion of the schools' CEG funding was deployed for extra staffing to support the teaching of the NCS children.

Records of minority culture activity and teachers' personal experience provided information of past activities that could not be observed directly (Stake 1995) during the two days. In both schools, these included reports on the multicultural days and parent meetings.

There were non-participant naturalistic observations (Punch 2005) of extra curricular activities, school assembly, and pupil activities during recess and lunch hour by the researcher. These informal observations were unstructured (ibid.) and checklists were not used. The aims of these informal observations were to identify the climate and interracial social relationships in the schools, and to provide supporting information when interpreting the interview data (see *Section 5.3, Social integration*). For example, in School A, some younger Nepalese and local pupils were observed to play together in a few occasions, but Nepalese pupils in upper classes tended to be reading alone or sitting quietly on one side watching the local children play among themselves. And in School B, the Nepalese pupils were not observed to mix with the local children in the playground. Observation notes with interpretations were written down immediately after observing each event.

4.6 Profile of respondents

A profile of the respondents can be found in Appendix Two. The profile of the headteachers, teachers and teaching assistants are not described in detail to protect their identity. Some teachers were invited to participate in the study by the headteachers, whilst others volunteered to participate. The teachers invited by the headteachers were senior teachers and teachers who taught the NCS pupils. They were more knowledgeable about the administrative practices and teaching of the pupils but were probably more supportive of the schools' policies. The others were invited by the researcher during their

free periods or after school hours, for the purpose of obtaining a broader perspective and information base. Actually, no teacher had refused to participate, and all were helpful in the interviews. Among the respondents, 6 were senior teachers and 1 of them had not taught the NCS children. 2 of the senior teachers were co-coordinators of the admission of NCS pupils and 2 were responsible for designing the curriculum for the NCS pupils. Among the 3 teaching assistants, one is Nepalese and one is Pakistani. All 3 were involved with teaching the Nepalese pupils.

The pupils who participated in the interviews were selected by the schools to avoid disruption to their learning, so it was a random selection. It turned out that 13 out of the 19 pupils were born in Nepal. The other 6 were born in Hong Kong and sent back to Nepal, and subsequently returned to Hong Kong. 16 out of the 19 pupils had arrived in Hong Kong after the 2001 Population Census was taken.

The parents were recruited by the schools. They were not necessarily the parents of the pupils interviewed. This is because the purpose of the study is to obtain the views of the parents and the pupils as separate groups, not to establish the relationship between the views of individual pupils and their parents. The arrangement can also maximize the participation of the pupils and parents without disrupting the pupils' study or inconveniencing the parents' work. 5 out of 12 respondents were either unemployed or their husbands were unemployed at the time of the interview.

4.7 Data analysis and interpretation

The response and discussion of different interviewees were typed out in different colours and stored electronically. It was then convenient to sort and group the responses under the different questions on the computer. Similar perceptions were clustered together. Dominant perceptions and outlier ideas were identified. The answers under each question were read and analyzed in respect to their similarities, differences, and possible relationships (Gillham 2000). The major perceptions were given weight in the data

presentation. Representative quotes were selected. Outlier perceptions were weighted, considered and selected according to the quality of the response. For example, only one parent said that the school should provide opportunities for the pupils to take up responsible positions within the school (*Section 5.4, Other education needs*); but this was included because it is significant and is found to be useful in raising minority pupils' self esteem in literature (Cunningham 2003). After selecting the suitable quotations, both the selected and non-selected quotations were reread to check justification for choice (Nisbet & Watt 1984).

Presentation of the data analysis mainly follows the question-and-answer format (Yin 2003). Responses from the participants of the two schools are grouped together where appropriate. Suitable headings were decided following the barriers and education needs. Perceptions of different groups of respondents were grouped together under the subheadings. Under each section, the responses of individual groups of respondents were interpreted and discussed. The perceptions of the three groups were juxtaposed and compared where appropriate. Literature and other sources of data (e.g. observation) were used to aid discussion.

Interpretation was evidence and data based. To improve validity, triangulation is pursued in the form of data source, such as response from different participants, and method source, such as observation in the schools and documentary evidence (Miles and Huberman 1994). For example, both the government and the schools said the parents did not care about their children's education and had low expectations. But considering the reports from different respondents, and the pupils having tutors despite their parents' financial difficulty, it can be concluded that the parents cared about their children's education. In another example, a teacher said individual teachers were not permitted to design their own Chinese curriculum to ensure there was systematic development. However, the learning materials of pupils in two levels were found to be exactly the same. Both the teacher's claim and the situation regarding the learning materials were presented in the findings (see *Section 6.3, the Chinese curriculum*).

Theory from literature such as the representative behaviour of immigrant minorities is used to compare with the behaviour and reports of the Nepalese children and the parents. There was also consistent look out for 'negative evidence' and 'rival explanations' (Miles & Huberman 1994) during the process of data analysis and selection of quotes. Negative evidence was observed in the Chinese lessons. A teacher had a problem with his pronunciation, although he is a native Chinese speaker. The headteacher might or might not have noticed this when he deployed his teachers. In both observed lessons, the teachers persistently ignored the pupils who did their own things. The quality of teaching in the schools cannot be concluded from the above observations, but as contended by Gillborn and Youdell (2000) there is the possibility that weaker teachers are assigned to teach the minority children. Rival explanations were not evident in the data interpretation.

There were some follow-up telephone calls, email exchanges and visits to the school websites to clarify the interview data collected. For example, the Pakistani teaching assistant was asked about the specific arrangement for and attendance in the Urdu classes. Information from the school websites was useful in helping to clarify the understanding and interpretation of the interview data, such as the arrangement of the health education lessons and the Chinese cultural activities for the Nepalese pupils in School A.

Findings and data analysis are presented in two chapters: Chapter five is on the pupils' achievement, barriers and education needs; and Chapter six is on the school's supportive mechanisms. A summary of the findings under the appropriate research questions are presented at the beginning of each chapter. At the end of each chapter, there is a summary which serves both to conclude the chapter and to introduce the following chapter.✓

4.8 Ethical considerations

This study in principle, observes the Code of Ethics for Research in Education of the Australian Association for Research in Education (1997). In particular, specific care is

taken to ensure that no harm is caused to the participants, especially the children. Other major areas that are taken into consideration include consent, confidentiality, and fairness in the reporting of the study.

Harm

As young children are one of the subject groups, particular care was taken in the interviews with them. The interviews with the children, including the pilot interview, were taken in the presence of an adult known to them, which could be a teaching assistant, a teacher or a parent (in the pilot). As the researcher is an experienced primary school teacher, words were chosen carefully to attend to the feelings and responses of the children. Attention was distributed to every child during small group interviews. Children were not taken out of their classes randomly. They were interviewed during lunch hour, self-study time, after school, and other lessons that the schools considered would not lead to their missing part of a curriculum. The atmosphere was relaxed in all the interviews with the children.

Consent

A letter explaining the purpose and procedure of the study was sent to the schools. They were assured that data obtained from the school would be stored securely and the researcher was the only person that had access to them (Bell 1999; Gillham 2000). The data would be destroyed within three months on completion of the study. Assurance of anonymity was confirmed in the letter. Consent from the headteachers was obtained.

Letters to the parents explaining the purpose of the study and inviting their participation and consent for their children's participation were given out through the schools. The teaching assistants helped parents with the understanding of the letters. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the research. The teaching assistant who helped with the telephone interviews was instructed to follow the same procedure. Teachers were not provided with the letter individually but were explained

about the study at the beginning of each interview and each teacher participated in the research voluntarily. Although some of the teachers were selected by the headteachers, they did not seem uncomfortable or resented the involvement.

Confidentiality and anonymity

As how the report will be used or who will read the report is beyond the control of the researcher, confidentiality and anonymity are essential to protect the identification of the headteachers, teachers and the schools (Johnson 1984; Nisbet & Watt 1984). Steps were taken to ensure that other professionals in the field are not able to identify the participants in the study. As there are only a few schools that admit a significant number of minority ethnic children, and every school has a different context, it may not be too difficult for people in the field to identify the schools. Therefore, descriptive materials of the schools are supplied at the minimum so as to make identification of the headteachers and the schools difficult, if not impossible (Johnson 1984). This was understood by both the headteachers. They were comfortable that their schools were not directly referred to and pseudonyms (i.e. School A and School B) were used.

Particular care is taken to keep the informants anonymous when direct quotations are used. Efforts are made to avoid attributing any particular view points or comment to a single individual (Yin 2003), the teachers in particular, especially when the issues may be controversial. Interview records of individual teachers were not sent to their headteacher. Children were identified by age and gender, and the number of years residing in Hong Kong only.

Correctness

A validating procedure to ensure correct recording and interpretation is employed (Yin 2003). As note-taking and translation are involved in recording the interviews, the best effort is made to reflect the views of the respondents. The headteachers were provided with the English translation of their interviews for comments and feedback. Interviews

with the parents and the pupils were typed out from the hand-written records within two days of the interview and sent to the headteachers for comment in the same week. Written notes of teachers' interviews were returned to individual teacher for verification and comments, upon requests. A draft copy of the findings of the study was sent to the headteachers to ensure correctness of interpretation, prior to finalizing of the conclusion. The researcher and the headteachers maintain contact during the course of the study. They provided additional information and helped with clarification of data. Upon completion of study, they were debriefed and supplied with the appropriate sections of the report.

Fairness in reporting

In attention to internal validity, care is taken to maintain fairness in analyzing and reporting findings through attending to all the available evidence (Yin 2003). It is necessary to maintain an open mind during the data collection process and interpretation of data and not be biased by preconceived ideas derived from the literature review, other sources and the researcher's personal experience (Johnson 1984; Nisbet & Watt 1984).

Neutrality

Blair (1998) argues about the 'myth of neutrality' in doing research, especially research on sensitive issues like 'race' and ethnicity. The choice of this topic and my personal experience as a headteacher in a school with minority ethnic pupils, indicate that I personally care about the issue. And as the study proceeds, my indignation of the unfairness that the Nepalese children have to endure has increased.

As a researcher, my task is to investigate the case study and report on it objectively. As mentioned at the beginning chapter, I did not begin with the intention to study the macro background of the government's education policy. I thought it would suffice to study what is happening to the Nepalese children in the two schools. But as I dug deeper, it soon became apparent that the macro context should be an essential part of the report.

And in presenting the background I have attempted to report the documents from a variety of sources. At the data analysis stage, as contended by Blair (1998), my priority is to let the data speak, and not let my values interfere with the analysis.

At the interviews with the parents and pupils, I was aware of my relatively unequal status with my informants as a researcher from a university and from the dominant ethnic group in Hong Kong. I had to be careful with my tone of voice and paralinguistic expressions and to maintain a relaxed atmosphere. The parents were in fact the powerful group because they had the knowledge which I wanted. I needed them to feel comfortable enough to tell me their feelings rather than tell me what they think I was looking for. The parents were all very gentle and polite²⁸. Their clothes were clean and they did not look like they had come straight from work, although some said they were using their lunch hour. This feeling came out strongly especially during the interviews with the fathers.

4.9 Limitations and difficulties

This study shares the common limitation of data collection through interviews that the data collected are perceptions, subject to interpretation, and that the respondents are assumed to be speaking the truth. For example, when the headteachers claimed their support strategies for the Nepalese pupils were effective, it is taken to be the truth. Triangulation of data is pursued in the process but it is not always practical or possible to verify the views of all of the respondents.

Language is an indispensable issue in this study. Interview with the headteachers and teachers were in Chinese and translation into English was involved in the note-taking and transcription. Therefore, quotations of headteachers and teachers are translations, not direct quotations. Although the headteachers and teachers did not suggest changes to the translation, there remains the possibility that some content may be lost in the process.

²⁸ I asked several teachers about the Nepalese parents' gentleness, the local teachers all told me it was because they knew they were inferior and had a low status in Hong Kong. But the Nepalese teaching assistant said the Nepalese were gentle people; they do not feel inferior in Hong Kong.

The parents had limited English on average. Very simple wordings and short sentences had to be used. Alternative wordings had to be explored when they had difficulty understanding the questions. The parents whose English was very weak seemed uncomfortable with the interview. Although they seemed to understand the questions and tried their best to provide answers, it was not possible to discuss issues or probe further during the interviews. And it is possible that they might be reluctant to clarify misunderstandings due to the language demands.

As the researcher cannot speak Nepali and the English level of some parents was weak, two of the interviews with the parents in School A were conducted through the school's translator. It is not known how much is lost in the translation and how much is misinterpreted. The interviews with the parents of School B were conducted by the Nepalese teaching assistant. Although this solves the language barrier, the teaching assistant was only able to follow the instrument and record the basic information.

Racial discrimination is a sensitive topic, especially for an interracial case study. There was not enough time to build up trust in the interviews. Secondary school pupils in other studies have reported racial discrimination (Ku et al. 2005; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004). During the interviews, only pupils in primary six were asked if they had experienced racial discrimination, as the researcher did not want to upset younger children. The issue was not covered satisfactorily as parents did not seem to know the meaning of the word, and there is the possibility that they did not want to admit it. Their understanding of the concept might be incomplete when it was explained through indirect references. (e.g. Do people treat you differently because you are Nepalese? Do you have difficulty finding jobs because you are Nepalese?) Racial discrimination is a complex issue that requires a separate study in itself.

There was much difficulty identifying the schools for the case study as there were only a few schools suitable for the purpose of the study, and two schools with different characteristics are preferred. Because of the severe competition for pupil numbers,

schools are reluctant to participate in the research and share their effective strategies and plans, or internal concerns.

The headteacher of School B had such reservations. On the day of the interview, he proposed two suggestions. First, he requested that their administrative strategies be used for research purpose only and not to be shared locally as it might affect their school's NCS pupil intake. Second, he suggested that the interviews with the parents be conducted by the Nepalese teaching assistant on the phone. He explained that the parents did not live in the neighbourhood, and it would be too much to ask of them to miss work to participate in the research. Although his requests posed difficulties from the point of the research design, his concerns were considered reasonable. Besides, it was too late to find another school. And, since the teaching assistant had established trust with the parents; it is likely that they would feel more comfortable expressing their opinion in a race-matching interview (Gillham 2000). It was agreed that the section on the school's administrative strategies would be deleted or prior consent would be obtained from him when the report is shared locally in the future. As the headteacher had his reservations, it is possible that reports given by him especially those which he referred to as 'business secrets', might have been incomplete.

Chapter 5 Achievement, Barriers and Education Needs

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research questions relating to the Nepalese pupils' achievement, barriers to achievement and education needs. Schools that can effectively cater for the Nepalese pupils' education needs and help them overcome their barriers should raise their achievement. The respondents' observations and perceptions are analyzed and discussed with reference to the framework of the research questions. Except for the section on achievement, the quotations from respondents of both schools are grouped together in general. There is a discussion of the findings after each relevant section. The chapter ends with a summary and implication of the findings. A summary of the questions and findings of this chapter is highlighted below:

Summary

The research questions addressed in this section are:

- (a) How well are the pupils of Nepalese origin performing in the case study schools relative to the performance of other pupils?
- (b) What are the barriers to achievement of this group of pupils, if any?
- (c) What are their education needs?

The main findings reported here are:

- (a) There is no formal achievement data to substantiate the achievement of the Nepalese pupils in relation to other ethnic groups, but reports from the 3 groups of respondents are generally positive. However, there seems to be some conflict considering their many barriers to achievement and learning needs.

If achievement is broadly defined to include aspects other than academic, then the Nepalese pupils are achieving satisfactorily due largely to their own initiative, in the course of interaction with the education they receive in schools. But their potential seems to be inadequately recognized in the present education system.

- (b) The Nepalese pupils have many barriers to school achievement. The major barrier commonly recognized is language. Other important barriers are poor education quality of some schools, low expectations from teachers, and a fragmented curriculum.

Peer influence not to succeed and exclusion do not seem relevant to them as barriers.

- (c) Their main education needs are language, adaptation and parental support, a central curriculum for second language learners, and social integration.

- (d) Judging from their many barriers and education needs, it is most likely that the Nepalese pupils are underachieving, and require systematic support at school and at home.

5.2 Achievement

A consistent problem encountered in this study is the lack of formal achievement data to assess the Nepalese pupils' achievement in relation to other ethnic groups. Territory-wide assessment results are confidential information. The schools do not monitor pupils' achievement on an individual basis or keep records of achievement according to ethnicity. When the researcher requested looking at teacher assessments, permission to do so was refused on the grounds that teachers are sensitive about having their test papers analyzed.

Consequently, the comments reported in this section are general impressions from respondents rather than based on analysis of test and examination results.

The headteachers and teachers' observations are grouped under the specific schools but not attributed to individuals. Observations from the pupils and the parents in the two schools are grouped together because there is little distinction between the responses from the two schools.

Observations made by the schools

In the interviews, the teachers and headteachers were asked for their perceptions on how the Nepalese were performing compared with other groups of pupils, and whether the Nepalese were able to learn with the local children. They discussed the pupils' performance in the main subjects: English, Chinese, Mathematics and General Studies (G.S.), and their learning attitude.

School A

(a) Reading

Reading is promoted as one of the goals of Hong Kong's primary and secondary education. Library books were stocked in the playground and in the classrooms and the Nepalese pupils were frequently observed to be reading in the common area during the school visits. The headteacher and teachers attributed this reading habit to the Nepalese trait, as local pupils were less self-motivated given the same environment:

'Nepalese pupils like reading. They read both English and Chinese library books. In Chinese, they read easier books and then gradually read up the level.'

(b) English, Chinese and Mathematics

Teachers believed the pupils' reading habit had helped them to learn English:

'Their English usually ends up two levels higher than local pupils as they reach upper primary. In general they achieve better than local pupils. Their reading culture is very good and it helps.'

Their achievement in both Chinese and Mathematics was suggested as satisfactory in general, but they seemed not to have achieved the necessary competence to learn through Chinese. The pupils could communicate in both English and Chinese:

'They can usually communicate in Chinese, though they prefer to speak in English. Some pupils can read and write simple Chinese.'

'They are about average in Math.'

(c) Attitude towards learning

Other than having a good reading habit, teachers commented that the Nepalese pupils were more motivated than local pupils in general. They were well behaved and they worked hard. They did well in dictation which required rote memory:

'I think the Nepalese children are more willing to learn and motivated than local pupils. They pay attention in class and respect the teachers.'

'Nepalese pupils work harder than local pupils. They usually do better in dictation. Some pupils think we give them too little homework and they ask for more.'

(d) Learning with local pupils

The question seeks to find out if immersion is effective for Nepalese pupils: (1) to learn and integrate in the local school system; and (2) to learn Chinese. The question is understood to be inadequate and the issue necessitates further study. Nevertheless, the headteacher was positive and individual children were referred to:

'A few pupils who have been in Hong Kong for some years can learn side by side with the Chinese students. For example, ... and ... (pupils' names) will be able to study in a CMI secondary school.'

Immersion seemed to be effective and a few children would be able to study in CMI secondary schools, which suggested that they might have acquired a near native level of Chinese. However, according to a teacher, many of the Nepalese pupils already spoke some Chinese when they joined the school. This suggests that minority ethnic pupils' achievement involves a complicated interplay of various factors that includes previous learning experience.

School B

(a) Reading

Reading was not mentioned by the headteacher or the teachers, and individual or group reading was not observed around the school. This difference in the reading climate may be due to the varied emphasis placed on reading in the two schools. The Nepalese's reading habit proposed by School A was not confirmed in School B.

(b) English, Chinese and Mathematics

Many pupils could not communicate in Chinese. Pupils who were weak in both languages experience difficulty in their learning:

'There are a lot of individual differences. Many pupils are weak in both English and Chinese. The pupils have difficulty learning Math and G.S. because they haven't got the level of English.'

To achieve in school, they need a reasonable level of English competence. It seems that the pupils' previous learning is not valued or recognized. There is no attempt to link their learning experience with those that are taught and valued in Hong Kong.

(c) Attitude towards learning

As in School A, it is agreed that the Nepalese are more motivated than local Chinese children:

'They like to come to school. They are committed to their learning. They are more motivated than local pupils in general.'

The pupils' attitude towards learning in both schools seems to reflect an immigrant minority mentality as suggested by Gibson & Ogbu (1991). However, there is a lack of concrete evidence to indicate that their motivation matches with their achievement.

(d) Learning with local pupils

\ The school was certain that the Nepalese and the Chinese children had to learn separately. This was reiterated by the headteacher and different teachers:

'No, they cannot learn together. They have to learn separately.'

The school was convinced that immersion does not work for the NCS pupils. It cannot help them with their academic achievement.

Observations made by pupils

The Nepalese pupils were asked specifically about their favourite subjects, difficult subjects, and how they thought they were doing. In general, pupils had a positive perception of their learning and achievement. They did not compare themselves with their classmates. Most pupils interviewed said they worked hard, again confirming the immigrant minority mentality:

'I'm hard-working, because I'm the monitor.'

(Girl, aged 8; has been in HK for 1 year)

'I work hard. I watch TV programmes there are things to learn.'

(Boy, aged 9; has been in HK for 7 months)

Mathematics, General Studies and Chinese were frequently mentioned to be difficult (more discussion in the next section on *Barriers to achievement*). Pupils liked different subjects, and found learning English the easiest. Some pupils disagreed that Chinese was difficult, though. This suggests the curriculum was not challenging enough and they were ready for more. The following quotations showed that the pupils were confident of their learning, not quite congruent with the perception of the adults:

'I like Chinese. Chinese is not difficult. I'm good at Chinese and English.'

(Girl, aged 8; has been in HK for 1 year)

'I'm hardworking. I like computer, music, science and Chinese.'

(Boy, aged 13; has come and returned to Nepal several times)

The majority of the pupils could communicate fluently in English. Two children who had arrived in Hong Kong recently had difficulty expressing themselves in English. A boy spoke textbook English, as if he had memorized the whole book and he was making a speech with each answer. Most children were articulate and were able to discuss issues, such as whether they thought English or Chinese was more important. Their ability to conduct a meaningful conversation was more advanced than local children of similar age groups.

Observations made by parents

Parents were asked how they thought their children were achieving. Parents were aware of their children's difficulty and expected a period of adaptation. In general, most parents considered their children's school performance to be 'good' and they were making progress:

'Actually no problem; don't see the problem, because they are very small.'

Similar responses were given by different parents. This suggests that they may not push their children to achieve, and some might not have high expectations. Chinese and English were on top of their mind, as if the two languages represented school achievement:

'English improving; Cantonese difficult.'

'Just start school one year only. Not learn Chinese this quick.'

Learning Chinese seemed to be the most important, even for parents in School B where the pupils studied in an English stream. Mathematics, computer literacy and other subjects were not mentioned by even one parent.

Discussion

To sum up the responses, the Nepalese pupils are not high achievers in the schools but they are following behind. There seems to be no expectation or plans for them to 'catch up' with their local peers some time in the future. In general, the verbal reports from the 3 groups of respondents are positive, but the pupils' level of English and Chinese has a significant impact on their learning in general.

Parents are very concerned with the learning of Chinese, more than English and any other subjects at school. This shows their aspiration for their children to integrate into Hong Kong society.

The emphasis placed on learning English and Chinese by all three groups in assessing pupils' achievement draws concern. This may be achieved at the expense of other learning areas such as higher order skills and different subject content knowledge. As contended by Syed and Burnett (1999), these are the basis for success in secondary school. In reality, the pupils seemed to be underachieving in Mathematics and other subjects as well.

Another concern is the lack of support for Nepalese pupils with special education needs (SEN). A pupil interviewed is observed to suffer from speech impairment and possibly had other unidentified SEN. Literature shows that certain minority ethnic groups are over- and under- represented within the SEN category in relation to the main groups (DfES 2006). Teachers in Hong Kong know little about how to identify their education needs, especially as some of these may be mixed up with language needs. There are no mechanisms in the system to support them. Because these pupils are expensive to support and the return is small, their needs are more likely to be ignored.

It is observed during the interviews that the pupils were expressive and had the ability to conduct an intelligent conversation above their age level. If achievement is broadly defined to include generic skills like interpersonal interaction, motivation, practical and

spoken skills, perseverance and self-confidence (MacGilchrist et al. 2004), they are achieving well. Unfortunately, despite the EMB's rhetoric (e.g. the Seven Learning Goals), achievement in these areas is not recognized and assessed in public examinations.

School A claims that the Nepalese pupils can communicate in both English and Chinese, and some will be able to study in a CMI secondary school. But School B is convinced that it is impossible for the Nepalese to learn with the local children and study the central curriculum for local pupils. The schools' different beliefs in how the NCS pupils learn best lead to their different administration strategies in relation to the NCS pupils (see *Section 6.1*).

5.3 Barriers to achievement

The pupils' barriers to achievement identified and discussed in this section are: race-related discrimination, disadvantaged socio-economic background, language, identity and self-esteem, quality of education, limited access and choice of schools, inadequate access to information, social integration, racial bullying and peer group pressure. The issues are identified in existing research findings discussed in Chapter three (e.g. Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Loper 2004; Tikly et al. 2004; YMMSS 2000).

In the interviews, the headteachers and teachers were asked about what they perceived to be the Nepalese pupils' barriers to achievement, if any, and whether they considered language, especially Chinese, to be the pupils' major learning barrier. The children and parents were asked what they found difficult with the children's learning. The 3 groups of respondents concur that language is the major barrier, but by language, they include both English and Chinese. Observations made by respondents in the two schools are grouped together in the following discussion because there are many similarities, and to avoid associating barriers with individual schools.

Race-related discrimination

As discussed in Sections 3.4 and 3.5, some teachers have stereotypes about certain ethnic groups, are unhappy about teaching them, and have low expectations of them in general. These are already various forms of discriminating behaviour.

Low expectations

Teachers' low expectation is a barrier to pupils' achievement (Ku et al. 2005; Tikly et al. 2004). During the interviews, several teachers expressed the belief that the children will be construction labourers or security guards when they grow up, and therefore it is unnecessary for them to pursue academic success. These teachers with low expectations are unlikely to take the initiative to improve the effectiveness of their teaching or to push their pupils. They are likely to ignore the parents who have high expectations citing the communication problem.

Parents believed their children needed time for adjustment and learning the languages. They had not put pressure on the schools to raise their children's achievement. Some teachers perceived this parent attitude as low expectations:

'They (the parents) have low expectations. As long as their children go to school, they are happy. In fact, the parents don't care much about the study of their children.'

Some teachers see low parental expectation as an incentive to teaching these children:

'Some teachers like teaching NCS pupils. Their parents do not have high expectations. It's like teaching kindergarten.'

But parents do care about their children's education, as seen in the following observations by the teaching assistants:

'I've seen mothers who are really concerned even though they work. I've seen mothers call me and ask me like... they don't understand these terms like fill in the blanks, and all that.'

'Some parents, they'd hire tutors, they would come to school, they would call us every day.'

Private tutors were mentioned repeatedly by the 3 groups of respondents. Most of the children interviewed had had a tutor one time or the other, despite their families' financial difficulties. This is clear evidence that the parents are trying to support their children's learning the best they could. And teachers may take many common practices in the system (e.g. fill in the blanks) for granted and not aware that they are not part of the pupils' learning experience, and have not given them the necessary help.

One of the teaching assistants was indignant about the low teacher expectation. He had a personal experience when he was preparing for his Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. His teacher told him it would be useless to study because he was not going to pass. He was very unhappy because he did not want to work in construction sites for the rest of his life.

Race prejudice

No teacher would personally admit he/she discriminates racially. According to the headteachers, some teachers might not be happy teaching NCS pupils, but there was no racial discrimination among the teachers. The following quote suggested that there were teachers who discriminated.

'Some teachers are very good. They do not discriminate.'

Poor teacher-pupil relationship and teacher stereotypes

Secondary school pupils have reported that their teachers treated pupils of different ethnicity differently, and some teachers had stereotypes of minority ethnic pupils as being useless, misbehaving and impolite (Ku et al. 2005). The Nepalese pupils were asked what they think about the school. In general, pupils said they liked school and the teachers were nice and friendly.

The teachers were asked about their perception of the Nepalese pupils, and what their colleagues thought about the Nepalese pupils. Most teachers commented that Nepalese pupils were better behaved than children of other ethnic origins:

'They don't miss school like the others. They sit quietly in the classroom. They seldom fight. Their homework is always neat and tidy. They are usually the monitors.'

However, teachers have observed that some of their colleagues were not happy with having NCS pupils in the school:

'Some teachers think they (the NCS pupils) are trouble.'

'The school needs these children to survive. But some teachers are not happy that we're admitting them. They think this is giving them extra work.'

In general, the situation of teacher-pupil relationship in the two primary schools seems fairly satisfactory. Although some teachers are unhappy about having NCS pupils in the school, the Nepalese pupils do not seem to be aware of it. Teacher stereotypes are directed to some ethnic groups, such as the Pakistanis. Nepalese pupils as a group are perceived to be well-behaved. Teachers usually respond positively to pupils who observe the school rules and are willing to learn (Gibson 1991):

Disadvantaged socio-economic background

Among the 12 parents interviewed, almost half were currently unemployed at the time (see Appendix 2 for their profiles). They are frequently out of work, have to take up part time jobs, work long hours, and are paid less than their local peers. The long working hours mean parents have less time to spend with their children, help them with their school work, or communicate with their teachers. Although parents do not have to pay school fees and the children's books are subsidized if they have financial difficulty, it still costs money to pay for lunch and commuting. The financial difficulty and economic insecurity at home may cause psychological barriers to the pupils' learning, limit their school choice (e.g. to save money on commuting), and take a toll on the quality of family life. Parents may suffer from stress caused by financial difficulties themselves, for example:

'Low salary, work very far. More and more difficult to find job. No language. Chinese very difficult to speak.'

For some children, even basic necessities are lacking. The children mentioned another girl during the conversation:

'She steals things, and she smells. She doesn't wash. We don't like her. Nobody talks to her.'

(Girl mentioned in the quote, aged 9, has been in HK for 7 months)

According to a teacher, the girl's family did not have hot water at home and probably would not shower during the cold days. As exemplified in this situation, disadvantaged socio-economic background has caused the child to suffer from social isolation. This makes it more difficult for her to adapt in a new environment, and may negatively affect her self-esteem.

Language

Language is considered to be the minority ethnic children's major barrier to achievement by the government, educators and researchers (e.g. Government of the HKSAR 2004, 2005; Li 2005a; Loper 2001). All the 3 groups of respondents in this study agreed that language is the children's biggest barrier as well as their education need. The headteachers and teachers unanimously agreed on this:

'I would say language is the biggest barrier. English is easier for them, but it's still a foreign language. Even when they can speak (English), it doesn't mean they can read or write.'

'Chinese is very difficult for them and forcing them to learn Chinese cannot help them...No, it's impossible for them to learn through Chinese. They have to use English. But, first they have to learn English before they can use it to learn other subjects.'

'Certainly, it (the biggest barrier) must be language. Some pupils can speak Chinese very well but they can't read or write. There is a lot of individual difference and many pupils are weak in both languages. This is especially obvious in Math. The pupils have difficulty learning Math because they haven't got the level of English. The English in the Math and G.S. books is too difficult for them.'

Although the schools agree that language is the children's major barrier, they have included English rather than confined it to mean only Chinese. Both schools believe it is easier for the children to use English to learn other subjects, but first, they have to learn English. A pupil who can speak English or Chinese, does not necessarily know how to read or write the language. School B does not seem to agree with the EMB that the children can acquire a reasonable competence of Chinese through immersion in a local school.

Schools believe Chinese is difficult for the Nepalese pupils to learn, but children did not seem to agree. Is it possible that the curriculum is too easy?

'Chinese, sometimes difficult. Math most difficult. When we write something in Chinese it's different from what we say in Chinese.'

(Boy, aged 13; has come and returned to Nepal several times)

Most pupils perceive Mathematics, General Studies and Chinese to be difficult. But it seems that the pupils are not learning other subjects properly even when they are taught in English. The following quotation would probably suggest the child had difficulty with the English language, and so could not learn Mathematics effectively:

I don't understand what the teacher says. He says equations. We don't know how. He speaks lots of words we don't understand.'

(Girl, 11; has been in Hong Kong for 8 years)

In fact, this girl had previously studied in an English-speaking school for a number of years and spoke English fluently. This shows that the lack of language skills as a barrier to pupil achievement is not necessarily confined to the pupils, it could be the teachers. Teaching through English requires a different level of language competence compared with teaching English. Teaching subject knowledge involves knowing the specific vocabulary as well as having the language competence to explain concepts at the level of the pupils' cognitive and linguistic development. But, primary school teachers are not trained to teach through English in Hong Kong.

The government, concern groups (Clem 2006c) and researchers consider Chinese as the minority ethnic pupils' major barrier to achievement. They have overlooked the fact that the children are also learning English as an additional language. If the children are identified to learn better in English, then maybe the government should help them achieve a reasonable competence in English so as to learn through it and learn Chinese as a subject. However, this may be in conflict with the parents' wish.

Parents have different expectations and aspirations for their children. Sometimes these expectations may not be realistic. In general, the parents believed their children need to learn both languages. They also imagined that their children would be able to acquire reasonable competence in Chinese if they studied in a local school, which is not necessarily true.

Many parents believed that it is more important for their children to learn Chinese than English. This is possibly a consequence of their socio-economic status. As the parents in the study have low socio-economic status, they are more likely to need Chinese to function in their workplace, and suffer from not knowing it. Parents with higher socio-economic background and those who plan to leave Hong Kong may want their children to be competent in English instead. The schools' policy is made more complicated catering for the different needs of the parents.

Identity and self-esteem

Pupils' perception of his/her identity and low self-esteem can be barriers to achievement. Chan and Chan (2004) found newly arrived Chinese pupils to have lower self-esteem than their Hong Kong peers. However, the minority ethnic pupils in Ku et al.'s study (2005) were proud of their ethnic origins.

In general, the Nepalese children in this study seemed happy. They said they liked Nepal and all spoke Nepali at home. Similar to the pupils in Ku et al.'s study, they thought it was enough to be able to communicate in their mother tongue, and few of their parents had taught them to read and write it. All pupils reported that they could speak several languages that included Nepali, Hindi, English, Urdu and even Chinese. This showed that they had a positive self-esteem in spite of their minority status in Hong Kong.

Most pupils reported that they were doing well in school. However, it is possible that the pupils were not evaluating their achievement accurately because the teachers might be

giving them learning tasks that were too easy. The pupils in both Loper and Ku et al's studies had complained that the curriculum was too easy.

Consistent with the mentality suggested of 'immigrant minorities' (Gibson & Ogbu 1991), the Nepalese pupils believed they would have a bright future when they grew up:

'I want to be a businessman when I grow up. I want to make my parents happy. I'll stay in Hong Kong and be a businessman.'

(Boy, aged 12; has been in HK for 2 years)

'I want to go to a girls' school. I want to grow up and be a doctor or a teacher ... I've stayed in Hong Kong for eight years. It's so boring. I want to go to Europe countries.'

(Girl, aged 11; has been in HK for 8 years)

They compared Nepal with Hong Kong, and concluded that life in Hong Kong was better. They accepted their minority status in exchange for safety and better opportunities. They treasured their education opportunities and were motivated to work hard. Parents might have explained to them the importance of getting a good education and qualification in order to have a better future.

'There're a lot of killings in Nepal. That's why I don't want to go back.'

(Boy, aged 8; has been in HK for 1 year)

'Some children work in Nepal and don't go to school. In some villages, some children don't go to school...In Nepal, the schools close for many days. We don't know why.'

(Boy, aged 13; has come and returned to Nepal several times)

Identity and self-esteem do not seem to be the Nepalese children's barriers to achievement. This may be because they were studying in schools with a significant

number of minority ethnic pupils. Nepalese pupils in schools where there are only a few minority ethnic pupils may have different perceptions. Schools can help these pupils by promoting a caring and supportive learning environment with a curriculum that promotes learning.

Access to information

For different reasons, the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong are not proficient at finding information to inform their decisions. Many parents make important decisions based on information gathered through informal sources such as friends, employers and the playground (Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; Ku et al. 2005; Hong Kong Christian Service 2006). This is confirmed by the older children:

'Mother heard about this school from someone in the restaurant where she works.'

(Boy, aged 13; has come and returned to Nepal several times)

'I stayed at home and did not go to school. I was playing in the playground with some friends. I heard about this school. I told my father I wanted to come here, and he agreed. I want to learn Chinese.'

(Boy, 14; had been in HK for 7 years)

'Father suggested I go to Y²⁹, but I heard it was not good. The pupils are naughty.'

(same boy talking about choosing secondary schools)

The pupils in this study were studying in schools already, but their parents' information is acquired through informal channels which may be unreliable. This reflects the limitation of their ability to access resources and information, and explains why some pupils had stayed home without education. Pupils who are more mature take the initiative and responsibility of finding information.

²⁹ It is a secondary school that admits a large number of minority ethnic pupils; also on the EMB's list.

Poor education quality of some schools, access to schools, and school choices

These issues are identified in local studies (e.g. Loper 2001; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; YMMSS 2000), but it would go beyond the focus of this study to try to decide on the criteria to judge the quality of education a school provides.

Fighting in other schools was mentioned frequently by all groups of respondents. The first quote below was from a pupil. Not only did he confirm that fighting is a common phenomenon in primary schools with minority ethnic pupils, but he also gave concrete evidence that his parents cared about his education. As it is unusual to have a lot of fighting in local primary schools, the school that this boy went to seemed to have got out of control. It is not reasonably safe for its pupils and the quality of education it provided is in question.

'Last time I came to Hong Kong, I studied in X³⁰. There was a lot of fighting. Mother sent me back to Nepal. Then Mother found this school and sent me and my brother here.'

(Boy, aged 13; has come and returned to Nepal several times)

The following two quotes were from parents about school choices:

'Before, the school was far and we had to pay for transportation. Now this school is near. And the school has a lot of NCS students.'

'This was the only school they got place in.'

For many parents from low socio-economic backgrounds, they cannot afford to pay the school fees for private schools and want to save the cost of commuting. They themselves may have little education and know little about the education in Hong Kong. They tend

³⁰ It is one of the schools on the EMB's list, and has admitted minority ethnic pupils for a number of years.

to choose a school that is near, and preferably with many minority ethnic children so the climate may be more favourable for their children (OFSTED 2004a).

These children were already the lucky ones who were going to school; it is not known how many children are still staying at home. The parent in the second quote had applied to several primary schools for a place. But in spite of this competitive school environment, he was informed again and again that the schools had no vacancy for their child. Concerned about the workload, the schools had ignored their legal obligation to admit the children. The parent's experience is confirmed by a teacher:

'They don't have many choices. The big schools don't want them.'

By big schools, the teacher meant schools with 20 classes or above. Many of these schools have modernized and well equipped school premises. Some schools would rather recruit Chinese pupils across the border than have NCS pupils due to the language problem. So, it is usually those schools that need to maintain their pupil enrollment admit NCS pupils. The quality of education in these schools is not necessarily inferior, but given a school's top priority is survival, much of its effort is spent on promotion and recruiting pupils. And there may be teachers who are reluctant to accept the change and make the effort to learn how to teach these children.

Social integration

Previous local studies (Ku et al. 2005; Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; YMMSS 2000) found minority ethnic children to have few Chinese friends. In both schools, the headteachers disagreed. This is what one said:

'They play together, but there is always the language problem. They help one another with their study. For example the NCS pupils help the locals with their English and the local pupils help them with their Chinese dictation. They are fine. We do not see any problem. The NCS pupils make friends with some Chinese but

they are not very close friends. The NCS pupils have closer friendships among themselves.'

A teacher observed:

'Very seldom (that there's friendship between the local children and the NCS pupils). Before they didn't like each other and there was a lot of fighting. Now it has improved.'

The children were asked about their friendships in school. About half the pupil respondents in School A reported that they had both Chinese and Nepalese friends. In School B, almost all of the respondents said they did not have Chinese friends, although the Nepalese and the Chinese children studied together in some classes. Fighting is again mentioned, but it is the Chinese fighting the Chinese:

'In this school I have no Chinese friends. I've Nepalese, Indian, Pakistani and Filipino friends. I don't make Chinese friends at school. They always fight.'

(Girl, aged 11; has been in HK for 4 years)

Many Nepalese pupils and other minority ethnic children are indirectly segregated in a separate stream or in schools that especially catered for them. They lack opportunities to interact and develop friendship with local Chinese pupils, or use Chinese in authentic situations. This affects their integration into Hong Kong society.

Racial bullying

Teachers tend to underestimate the amount and intensity of racist bullying among the pupils (Cline et al. 2004). The two schools claimed there was no racial discrimination, while race-related name-calling or bullying is not serious. When such incidents occurred, they were dealt with under the normal discipline procedures, and considered adequate. The headteachers and teachers attributed the problem to individual naughty children:

'A few children call them names ... but the situation is acceptable.'

Only the more matured pupils were asked about the issue of racial bullying and all of them replied to the positive. In most cases, the Nepalese pupils are able to cope with racial bullying as quoted below. The situation usually did not improve after teacher's intervention and some pupils chose to ignore or put up with it or steered out of trouble. This is in line with the behavior of 'immigrant minorities' (Gibson & Ogbu 1991):

'They make fun of us, say something in Chinese, and laugh. (What do you do?) Do nothing.'

(Boy, aged 12; has been in HK for 10 months)

'Some pupils pushed me. I asked why they pushed me. He said I was Nepalese. I told them not to push me, but they won't improve. I believe when I go to secondary school, this will not happen.'

(Boy, aged 13; has come and returned to Nepal several times)

'You mean discrimination? Yes, there is discrimination in my class. There are some bad children. They call me names a lot. I tell the teachers. The teachers punish them but they do not change.'

(Boy, aged 14; been in HK for 7 years)

This boy had been in Hong Kong for 7 years. He was two years over-aged and he had experienced race-related bullying. Teachers do not seem to be able to protect the pupils, and they are left to fend for themselves. What could the situation be for younger pupils?

Parents were aware there was race-related bullying in the school. But when asked if they knew about the school's discipline policies, they had no idea. Parents seemed to accept racial-bullying as a price to pay for their children's education because of their minority status (Gibson 1991).

Peer pressure not to succeed

Peer group pressure not to succeed in schools is frequently reported (e.g. Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Fitzgerald et al. 2000; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Tikly et al. 2004), but the pupils in both schools did not appear to have such pressure since they readily said they worked hard and talked about their aspirations in front of their classmates (see previous section on *Identity and self-esteem*). The QAD report (2004b) described positive relationship among the pupils. Perhaps this is because they are young and in primary school. However, in those primary schools where there are a lot of fights; it is possible that there is peer group pressure not to succeed. Although the problem is not reported in similar local studies (e.g. Ku et al. 2005; YMMSS 2000), it does exist in secondary school, and the problem is serious. One of the teaching assistants recalled:

'When I first came to HK, I went to Y³¹; by Form 2 I lost interest in study. It's happening to everyone. It's horrible. Actually like in this school you can see children working hard, but in those schools, if you work hard, they'll tease you, they'll bully you. So that's why many of my friends are working in restaurants as waitress, and in saloons. Some of them are still jobless. Some go back to India to study. It's sad. These children are fine here (in the case-study school), but in five years, they'll be bad.'

If what happened to the teaching assistants is happening in all the three secondary schools that cater for the minorities, then the children would have a slim chance to succeed. It is sad knowing that their achievement is beyond personal effort but constrained by factors that exist in the wider context.

Exclusion

The education system in Hong Kong does not permit school exclusion in any form for pupils between nine and fifteen. The EMB has a strict monitoring system on exclusion.

³¹ This is the same secondary school previously mentioned by the pupil on choosing schools.

Both schools reported that the Nepalese pupils maintained satisfactory attendance and did not take casual absence.

Discussion

Although it is difficult to determine the Nepalese pupils' school achievement in relation to other pupils, their barriers are many and they are likely to be underachieving. Unless the barriers are tackled systematically and with determination at different levels, both at school and at home, the Nepalese and other minority ethnic pupils will always be underachieving. Pupils from low income families are more dependent on the school for their academic achievement (Banks 2002). Schools may need them for survival, but they should be treated with respect and as individuals. Our system and schools are failing them if their future continues to be no farther than the construction sites.

A lot of attention is put on their learning of Chinese (e.g. EOC 2004, 2005; Government of the HKSAR 2003; Li 2000a, 2000b). English as a learning barrier is overlooked by the EMB and other concerned groups. The parents' access to information remains unsatisfactory. The families' low socio-economic status has direct and indirect impact on the children's well-being and learning. A safe and peaceful school environment conducive to learning is not taken for granted. The poor education quality of some schools available to them means achievement is not just about individual effort.

There are some ethnic conflicts among the pupils but these are not often reported to the teachers. It is likely that the children and their parents have an 'immigrant minority' mentality and thus, are willing to put up with the difficulties. They believe the situation is only temporary and will improve in the future if the pupils work hard, which may explain their self-motivation as reported by the teachers.

In general, the pupils interviewed feel positive about themselves and do not experience identity insecurity, despite the challenges with learning new languages and adaptation in

a new environment. They aspire to a promising future of education and career. They and their families may be unaware that they do not have access to the full curriculum.

The next section will discuss the pupils' education needs. Similar to the findings in Bhatti's case study (2004), it is discovered that many parents are unable to support their children's learning and much individual effort is required to persist and succeed in this unfamiliar learning environment.

5.4 Education needs

This section covers the minority ethnic pupils' education needs that are not discussed in section 5.3. These include adaptation support, an appropriate curriculum, and parental involvement in their education.

Parental support and home-school cooperation

Parental support and involvement with the children's education are key factors in raising pupils' achievement (DfES 2005a; OFSTED 2002a, 2004a, 2004b). Some teachers in Cunningham et al.'s study (2004) have highlighted the lack of parental support as one of the major barriers to pupils' learning. In the following quotes, the teaching assistants gave a lot of insightful comments from their observation and personal experience. Unlike common perception, they believed that the pupils' major barrier to achievement is their lack of parental support, rather than language, and it is because the parents are mostly uneducated:

'The children don't really have any barrier except for the fact that they have no support from home. There's no learning atmosphere at home. Parents are not educated. They can't push the children because they themselves are not educated and they don't know how to help them. So the teachers shouting in the classroom, "Why don't you do your homework?" It's not really the children's fault because

they don't know. Even when the teacher calls the parent, "Your child hasn't finished the homework." The parent said, 'OK. I'll try to do something.' But when the child goes back home, the parents can only scold them. They don't know how to help. They want to help. They cannot afford tuition. So this is a desperate situation. The teachers don't really understand.'

Of course, some parents may be educated and some may be more determined to support their children. But, does this mean children whose parents are not educated do not stand a chance to succeed in school? Schools in the public sector are supposed to rectify this problem and give every child an equal chance to succeed (Halsey et al. 1980).

The Pakistani teaching assistant explained the connection between the parents' education or lack of it and the children's success in the Hong Kong system:

'When I (a Nepalese child) came to Hong Kong, I (he/she) might not be able to adapt fully, I might lag behind and I can't cope. Eventually I give up... I've seen so many cases ... If their parents are supportive, they'll push them, they'll help them. Then that child succeeds. If the parents are not educated, they'll not be able to help their children, so their children don't have anybody to turn to. They don't have anybody to seek help.'

The parents' long working hours have left the children mostly on their own:

'The parents are all busy. And if the children are home by themselves, they would not study. So if both of the parents are working, there will be nobody at home to tell them to study. So I think the problem really is they've nobody at home to supervise them.'

The parents are not educated and they work long hours. These are facts that cannot be altered. But, where are the support strategies that are 'within the schools' power to help the pupils and their parents? Most teachers gave a response similar to this:

'No, I don't call them (the parents). I can't communicate with them and they don't help their children with the homework. If the children have tutors, the tutors help them with their homework. The parents do not push their children to do the homework.'

Although many parents can speak some English, teachers are reluctant to communicate with them. They believe the parents are unable to help and rely on the pupils' tutors to help them at home (see also the discussion in *Section 6.5*).

Adaptation support

The Nepalese pupils need continuous and systematic support to help them adapt in school and society. Nepalese children come to Hong Kong at different ages (Government of the HKSAR 2003: paragraph 13.24), which may lead to a variety of education needs. One parent interviewed considered her child's major education barrier to be adaptation to a foreign education system, but she felt powerless to support him (see *Section 3.3, Link with parents and parental support*):

'He's not used to the school system.'

The teaching assistants observed:

'The children need to adapt to a different environment and the school system (in Hong Kong) is different.'

'In Nepal, the education system is totally different from Hong Kong. For example, we don't have multiple choice. Here the learning style is different.'

There are things that we take for granted in Hong Kong, for example, filling in the blanks, doing multiple choice questions and completing questionnaires. Because we are so used

to doing these things, we forget that other people such as the Nepalese have no similar experience in the part of the world they come from. Teachers are unfamiliar with the various education systems and learning content that their minority pupils have studied before arriving in Hong Kong, and have not made use of them to help the pupils build their knowledge.

The EMB is aware that the education system in Hong Kong compared to those in the countries that the immigrants come from, are different. They have consigned adaptation programmes to some non-government organizations to prepare the children (see *Section 2.4*). However, all the pupils interviewed had not attended the programmes or classes. For some children, this was not their first school in Hong Kong so the programmes might not meet their needs. Among the younger children, some had been to a local or Nepalese kindergarten. Some children had been to private schools or other schools that used English as the medium of instruction (e.g. the government school) before attending the present school. This shows that the pupils' adaptation needs are very complicated; the social workers who teach these adaptation programmes may not be able to cater for their different needs. Besides, they may be able to familiarize the pupils with society in Hong Kong but are not trained to teach them the language skills.

Other children who had newly arrived in Hong Kong had neither attended those programmes designed to support them. Some parents considered the venues too far away and there was nobody to take the children:

'We have to work. No one to take them.'

Even the teaching assistant believed the induction programmes were not necessary. She is likely to convey this message to the parents:

'Why would they attend the programmes? It's far away and it wastes time. The children can just come to this school and study.'

At present, the induction programmes are not compulsory. Since the schools need every child to survive, they would not refuse to admit them, regardless of the children's readiness. Perhaps, more importantly, parents and teachers are not convinced of the usefulness of these induction and bridging programmes.

The school curriculum

It is generally assumed that a Chinese curriculum can sufficiently meet the Nepalese pupils' curriculum needs (e.g. Clem 2006a, 2006c; EOC 2006). In reality, Nepalese pupils who are learning through English are using textbooks for native English speakers to learn Mathematics, Social Studies and other subjects, and the language is too difficult for them. Those who are learning through Chinese have a similar problem. A curriculum for second language learners or a bridging curriculum that makes less language demands may be necessary to help these children to learn the knowledge and concept of these subjects. There will be more discussion on the curriculum of the two schools in Chapter 6.

Other education needs

The parents had their views about how the school could help their children better but it seemed nobody had asked them. The following observations from parents suggested that the schools should place a higher priority on listening to parents to improve their policy and practices (see *Section 6.4 Working with parents*):

'They (the Nepalese pupils) usually don't know what's happening in school.'

'The teachers can talk in simple English. They don't (shouldn't) always talk in Chinese about something important.'

'The school can involve them in school activities; to make them prefects and make them more responsible.'

As observed during the school visits, school announcements were mostly in Chinese. Some teachers might think they were providing the NCS pupils with more chances to listen to authentic Chinese, but the children might feel alienated and were likely to miss out on important announcements. The mono-language of communication as well as the possible fewer involvement in functional posts are likely to make the pupils feel like outsiders and difficult to develop a sense of belonging. This may have negative effect on their motivation to study.

Discussion

The pupils have many education needs and those discussed in this section are not meant to be exhaustive. In this study, parental support is highlighted as the education need that makes a difference to the pupils' achievement, but there is insufficient parental involvement at present. Many parents have chosen to put their children in Chinese schools hoping that this will help them learn Chinese and integrate into Hong Kong society in the future. They are aware of the many barriers their children encounter, but are unable to provide them with the level of support necessary for success.

Language continues to be one of the children's major education needs as the tool to learn other subjects. A quality curriculum is also necessary. Many children would need help with adaptation in the schools, but the respondents have not participated in the EMB's induction programmes. Nepalese pupils have other education needs that are not discussed here but are no less significant to individuals, such as participation in extra curricular activities and special education needs support.

5.5 Summary

This chapter focuses on the findings identified as the pupils' barriers and education needs essential to their achievement. The case-study schools claim the Nepalese pupils are

learning and progressing satisfactorily. However, when the pupils' barriers and education needs are taken into consideration, there seems to be some discrepancies, and the situation is not as positive as reported.

It is also likely that the Nepalese pupils are placed at a low entry point of the curriculum, despite their age and previous education experience. If this is the case, then after the initial adaptation period and when they have gained competence in the language of learning, they might be able to catch up with the intended curriculum. But this would depend on many factors that include personal determination, the policy and practices of the school, the quality of the curriculum, and systematic support both at school and at home.

This takes us to the next chapter on the discussion of the schools' policies and practices. We will study how the schools manage the challenges brought about by the change, how they adapt their existing policies and practices to accommodate the new comers, and whether the strategies they employ to support the pupils can meet their education needs, overcome their barriers, and effectively raise their achievement.

Chapter 6 School Policy and Practices

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter shows that the Nepalese pupils have a variety of education needs and barriers to achievement. As discussed in Chapter 3, effective schools implement a combination of strategies to support their minority ethnic pupils, that may include strong leadership committed to values of equal opportunities, a school culture of high expectation of pupils, provision of quality teaching, a rich curriculum, language support, and involving parents (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Blair et al. 1998; Cline et al. 2002; Cunningham et al. 2004; Dimmock & Walker 2005; OFSTED 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2004a, 2004b; Parsons et al. 2005; Tikly et al. 2002, 2004).

This chapter focuses on the policies and practices that the two schools employ to raise the achievement of the minority ethnic pupils, with the aim of identifying good practices in the local context. These policies and practices may not correspond to all the barriers and education needs identified, as the schools might not consider some of them to be their concerns, and consequently have not enacted on them. These may include low teacher expectations, unsatisfactory teacher-pupil relationships, and unsatisfactory quality of education.

The main sections in this chapter are: the schools' administrative strategies, curriculum, teaching and learning, working with parents, school leadership, a learning school, the EMB's supportive mechanisms, and summary and implication of the findings. The discussion in this chapter is mainly based on the headteacher/teachers group's view. Their observations and perceptions are analyzed and discussed following the framework of the research questions, and the successful school strategies identified in the literature.

The research question and a summary of the findings of this chapter are highlighted below:

Summary

The research question addressed in this section is:

What examples of good practice exist in the case study schools for raising the achievement of pupils of Nepalese origin and for meeting their education needs?

The main findings reported here are:

- (a) The supportive policies and practices are mainly school-based and depend on the unique contexts of individual schools.
- (b) Language underlines most adaptation support and the curriculum. Other needs of the pupils may not be adequately catered for.
- (c) Teachers believe it is easier for Nepalese pupils to learn English than Chinese.
- (d) The school-based curricula may be fragmented and cannot adequately cater for the pupils' educational and personal needs, but there is no monitoring from the EMB on the quality.
- (e) Teachers do not have the relevant training to teach minority ethnic children. The teachers deployed to teach them do not necessarily have teacher training.
- (f) The headteachers make the major decisions. Teachers are involved in other decision-making processes and in school practice.
- (g) The values underlying the schools' policy and practices are of the pragmatists (Law et al. 2004), rather than equality of opportunity.

- (h) The schools do not put a high priority on parental involvement as an essential practice to help raise the children's achievement. Parents are expected to support the schools' policies. Communication with parents is mainly conducted through the teaching assistants or translator and written messages in the student handbook.
- (i) The EMB's supportive mechanisms to the pupils and the schools do not seem to meet their needs adequately.

6.2 Administrative strategies

Every school exists in a unique context and develops a distinctive combination of strategies appropriate to it (Blair 2002; Henze 2000; Walker 2004). It may be convenient to recall that both schools did not start with a vision to teach minority ethnic children. School A began admitting Nepalese pupils hoping to boost its pupil enrolment and save it from closure. The pupil number in School B was declining when it was invited by the EMB to admit the NCS pupils. School A has a total of 72 pupils while School B has 740. Because of the different school sizes, their school policies and practices to support the minority ethnic pupils are expected to be different to a certain extent. The Nepalese is the major minority ethnic group in School A, while they are only one of the minority groups in School B. In School B, therefore, the school's policies and practices are not designed solely with the Nepalese pupils in mind but also for other minority ethnic groups.

The questions in this section are mainly addressed to the headteachers, and the coordinators who were senior teachers. Other teachers supply part of the information. The specific question asked in this section is: What (administrative) strategies does the school use to facilitate the intake of ethnic minority pupils? The question is open ended. A second question: Which strategies do you find more effective? met with the following response: All strategies are effective; otherwise we would not be using them!

School A

Schools usually build on what they have been doing successfully (Cunningham et al. 2004). School A was previously involved in a seed project for 'Cross Level Subject Setting' in its English subject, and they felt confident of its application and use. They consider it suitable for supporting the minorities, so they use it as their core strategy. The set approach was implemented in the whole school and for all the pupils, not limited to the Nepalese. The small size of the school also facilitated the management of this system.

(a) Cross level subject setting

When the Nepalese pupils first arrived at the school, they were given a placement test in English, Mathematics and Chinese to assess their level in the subjects. After the placement test, the Nepalese pupils were assigned to the set appropriate for their subject level, in the three subjects. The pupils returned to their original classes for other lessons, and studied with the Chinese pupils. Pupils could move up the sets when they were assessed to be sufficiently ready.

There was some monitoring of achievement, which was conducted on individual basis, not across ethnic groups. Since the pupils studied according to their level, this could be done conveniently. This was explained by a teacher:

'They are assessed according to their level in the subjects. Pupils compare with themselves, not with their classmates. And we promote pupils to an upper level ('set') when they are ready. We are flexible because we are a small school.'

(b) Older pupils who had arrived in Hong Kong recently

Some pupils had had several years of education in Nepal or in another school that taught in English before they joined the school. Some of them had almost no Chinese and could

not even join the primary one set in Chinese. As Math and General Studies were taught in Chinese, these pupils' level in Math and General Studies did not match their level in Chinese. So they were grouped together to learn English, Chinese, Mathematics, and General Studies rather than joining the sets.

(c) Human resource management

The admission of the Nepalese pupils had significant implications on the human resource of the school. The set teaching approach required extra teachers, who were not supported by the standard staff provision. One or more teaching assistants were needed to give the pupils withdrawal and after class tutorial. A Nepalese translator was needed to bridge the communication gap with the parents.

The small one-off funding from the EMB could not possibly pay for these salaries, and the headteacher had to deploy other resources for the purpose. Consequently, she had to settle for part time teachers with less experience. These teachers would readily leave for a better job opportunity. This inevitably affects the quality of education the pupils received. Both the teaching assistant and the translator were employed part time.

The headteacher had made an effort to employ minority ethnic staff to meet their needs. The translator was a Thai who spoke Urdu and Cantonese. However, the Nepalese tutor who gave lessons on Nepali on Saturday mornings left on finding a full time job.

Most teachers were involved with teaching the Nepalese pupils. A senior teacher coordinated the administrative work of testing and grouping the pupils. Another senior teacher supported with the curriculum leadership. Although the school had employed extra manpower, the workload was increased for all the staff.

(d) Teacher professional development

An important issue of schools with minority ethnic pupils is staff development (Dimmock & Walker 2005). Although the EMB claimed to provide opportunity for teacher development (Government of the HKSAR 2004), the teachers in School A developed themselves in the process. They designed, tried out and modified the curricula for the Nepalese pupils. Some teachers adapted primary textbooks for native English speakers when preparing the teaching materials. A teacher said he researched on the internet to learn more about the culture of the Nepalese.

(e) An equality policy

The school did not have an equality policy and the headteacher believed it was unnecessary.

Discussion

The school's major support strategy is teaching the pupils in sets. There is some form of performance monitoring as individual pupils are promoted to the next set according to their performance. This arrangement is beneficial for the pupils and may be considered in schools with minority pupils. Pupils may benefit more if they have an individual portfolio, with individual progress plans and targets.

The set approach provides authentic chances for the pupils to learn Chinese. Since the Nepalese pupils studied with their Chinese peers when they returned to their class for the other subjects, they had many chances to listen to Chinese spoken and used in context. They might not be able to speak Chinese fluently and with confidence, but their listening competence should improve and they have authentic chances to use it in the classroom. The approach also facilitates their socio-relation with the local pupils.

Some Nepalese pupils were weak in English, which was insufficient to meet the language requirement of the curriculum content in subjects like Mathematics and General Studies. This would affect their learning of these subjects.

School B

School B had two months – July and August in 2002, to come up with the appropriate strategies to facilitate the inclusion of minority ethnic pupils in primary one. Their plans had to be modified to accommodate the unexpected pupils in all the six levels when the primary-one pupils brought their brothers and sisters in September. The initial one class (32 pupils) of NCS pupils was expanded to about 300 pupils in two years.

(a) A separate English stream, mixed and split classes

For the levels that had sufficient NCS pupils, the school put them in classes separate from the local pupils, and taught them in English. Local pupils could only study in the Chinese stream; they did not have the option to study in the English stream.

In some levels where there were not enough NCS pupils to make up one class or there were more than one class of pupils but not enough to make up two classes, the extra pupils were put in the same classroom with the local children. They were taken out of their class to join the NCS class in Chinese, Math and General Studies. For this reason, there were around 45 pupils in the two Chinese lessons observed³².

(b) Monitoring of achievement

The school did not monitor pupil achievement on an ethnic group basis. As the school rightly asserted, there was a lot of within group difference. The issue of language came up in the interviews frequently:

³² The average class size in primary school is 32.4 in 2005/06. (EMB online)

'We do not monitor the progress of different ethnic groups. There's much within group difference in their language ability, and their language ability affects their learning.'

Pupils were assessed in tests and examinations. Parents were provided with report cards. This is the standard practice in local aided schools.

'Pupils' achievement is considered on an individual basis because everyone is different. We provide parents with report cards recording their tests and examination results. We treat pupils from different ethnic backgrounds the same. We do not treat them differently. Some pupils are better and some are weaker. All pupils are like that, whether they are Chinese or Nepalese.'

The school had enrolled their NCS pupils in the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) in the current school year:

'For the first time this year, they participate in the English and Math papers in the TSA. We may know more about their progress in a few years. But even then the results provided by the Examination Authority would still be bundled together and not grouped by ethnicity.'

There was no pressure on the school to raise the NCS pupils' achievement at the moment. Neither the EMB nor the School Management Committee seemed to bother about it. Nevertheless, the school may have to demonstrate their value-addedness in the TSA in a few years.

(c) Placement test and English support

When a minority ethnic pupil first joined the school, he/she was given an English test to see if he/she could learn in English, or needed to join the summer class. If the child

joined the school in the middle of the term and needed help with his/her English, one of the teaching assistants took him/her out of the classroom for individual tuition for a few weeks.

(d) Summer class

The school provided a bridging class for new pupils during the summer vacation. The focus of the bridging class was the learning of English so they would be able to use English to learn. The class was taught by the minority teaching assistants.

(e) Human resource management

The school operated two streams. Some teachers were deployed to teach in either one of the streams; others taught in both streams. At the time of study, two senior teachers helped with the leadership. One was assigned as coordinator for the education of the NCS pupils. Another led the curriculum.

The school needed extra staff to perform different duties. Splitting classes, group teaching and summer classes required extra teachers. Senior teachers who helped with the coordinating duty, curriculum development, and translation needed other teachers to take up part of their original workload. Even extra clerical staff were needed because an English version was needed for school documents and circulars. Staff who could speak the parents' language were needed to communicate with the parents.

There is no conscious effort of School B to employ staff to reflect the pupil composition, although a Nepalese and a Pakistani teaching assistant were employed. Both teaching assistants had obtained permitted teacher status, which means they were not trained but could teach in the classroom. They helped to bridge the communication gap between the school and the parents, gave the pupils tutorial and withdrawal support, and substituted teachers who were absent. The Pakistani teaching assistant also gave Urdu class to interested pupils. Their various duties show they have an important role in the school.

(f) Teacher professional development

School B had joined the community for schools with minority ethnic pupils. It is organized by the EMB and runs regular sharing sessions. Teachers and social workers share their learning and experience in these sessions. The EMB officials relate their recent policies in these sessions as well.

(g) An equality policy

The school did not have an equality policy either. The headteacher considered that it was unnecessary under his leadership.

Discussion

School B operates an English stream for these pupils, and teaches Chinese as an additional language. Their supportive mechanism focuses on the English language, such as summer class and individual withdrawal tuition. There is a lot of administrative work splitting and combining classes.

However, as reported by the respondents and observed in the school, the Chinese pupils and the NCS pupils stayed away from one another. The school's policy and practice are not concerned with promoting positive interethnic relations, especially between the Chinese pupils and the NCS pupils, which should benefit all pupils.

Both headteachers are confident that their strategies are effective in raising the NCS pupils' achievement. However, their strategies are more 'process oriented than outcome oriented' (Dimmock & Walker 2005: 75). They are able to list out the strategies but there is a lack of achievement targets.

Pupils benefit from having teachers of their same ethnic origin and schools need multiethnic staff and teachers for different functions. However, it is not easy for minorities in Hong Kong to obtain a teaching qualification. Teacher training at the certificate level is delivered in Chinese. Permitted teachers without teacher training need to have at least a high diploma or an associate degree³³ (EMB online) and it is relatively difficult for minorities to reach this education level (Xia 2006; YMMSS 2002).

A major gap that occurred repeatedly was the lack of data to determine the progress of the pupils in the different subjects. To many of the headteachers and teachers, monitoring achievement suggests extra workload and scrutiny from the EMB. When there is concrete achievement record, there will be hard evidence that may work against them, for example, denoting that a certain minority group or a percentage of pupils are at risk. Therefore, the schools are more likely to share the EMB's position of not wanting to record and monitor the achievement of their pupil groups. While the government is not prepared to make it a statutory requirement for all schools to monitor ethnic group achievement, the few schools with a significant number of minority ethnic pupils are unlikely to take on the initiative themselves.

One of the aims of this study is to identify how the schools' policies and practices can be applied in the average local schools. However, it is discovered that their school policy and practices are modified in the process of accommodating the minority ethnic pupils. They do not operate as average local schools in many ways.

6.3 Curriculum

Issues relating to curriculum such as the school curriculum, language of instruction, the school-based Chinese curriculum, teaching and learning, the multicultural curriculum and learning of the mother-tongue are discussed in this section. The framework is structured

³³ The minimum requirement for permitted teachers has been raised from 5 passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination to post secondary diploma since 1 Oct 2004; thus increasing the difficulty for ethnic minorities to become teachers.

from the responses to the questions in the questionnaire under ‘Achievement’ and ‘Curriculum’ (see *Appendix One*).

The language of instruction and the curricula of subjects other than Chinese

Both schools considered it easier for the pupils to learn in English, and the Nepalese pupils were taught mainly in English. In both schools, English was taught using the same textbooks as the local pupils. As the Nepalese and some other minority groups (e.g. Indian) may learn English quicker, the English curriculum may not be sufficiently challenging for them.

For Mathematics and General Studies, both schools used commercially published textbooks written in English, designed to be used in international schools, as the basis of their teaching. Sometimes the teachers simplified the language or tailored the content. A curriculum officer from the EMB provided School B some support in adapting the Mathematics textbook.

The Chinese curriculum

Both schools taught Cantonese, rather than Putonghua to their NCS pupils, considering they would need it for their everyday life in Hong Kong. The two schools designed their school-based Chinese curriculum from different approaches, mainly reading and writing, rather than speaking and listening.

In School A, the headteacher believed the teaching of Chinese should focus on writing. She considered speaking to be not difficult because the language environment is present in the pupils’ everyday life:

‘The difficulty lies in writing. Once the pupils can understand the combination of the character parts, their fear is gone and developing competence in the language would be easy.’

So, they started with teaching the pupils to write simple words, the character compositions and the direction of the strokes. The school also used lower level Chinese textbooks for their Nepalese pupils. A few pupils who had been in Hong Kong for a number of years, learnt Chinese with their local peers.

In School B, the headteacher was pleased that there was no central Chinese curriculum and they had the freedom to design their own materials. The curriculum leader and the Chinese panel chairperson designed the Chinese curriculum for the whole school, so there seemed to be some kind of system within the school:

'We don't want everyone to be designing their own materials so it can be more systematic and there is no overlapping.'

She was very confident of her curriculum leadership and explained her curriculum design that focused on reading:

'It's mainly based on reading – word recognition, and writing of simple words. First, it's reading, speaking, listening, and lastly we teach them to write simple sentences. We use some story books. Our pupils don't know the basic words so even the kindergarten textbooks are too difficult for them. In primary one we teach some rhymes and in primary two we teach them to read short paragraphs. We usually write these materials ourselves.'

When I visited the classrooms, however, it turned out that the pupils in both primary 4 and 6 were learning the same material on shopping. The classes were unusually big by Hong Kong standard. The language was about upper kindergarten level and there was very little content material covered in a lesson. The pupils learnt to read a short paragraph and a few Chinese characters over a week. This corresponds with Loper's finding (2004) that the Chinese lessons are too simple, and may explain why the pupils said Chinese was easy.

A multicultural curriculum

The two schools had made a limited effort to introduce a multicultural dimension into the curriculum, usually in the form of a multicultural day or dress-casual day. The children wore their traditional clothes and shared their ethnic food culture on the day.

In School B, the Nepalese teaching assistant had introduced the Nepalese culture to the whole school. Unfortunately, as she spoke in English, the Chinese pupils might not have understood much. In School A, the Nepalese pupils in the different levels were grouped together to learn about Chinese culture every Friday afternoon. They were once taken to a Chinese restaurant for a dim-sum treat.

The strategies of the schools differed. School A introduced Hong Kong and the Chinese culture to the Nepalese pupils to help them integrate into society. School B introduced their minority ethnic pupils to their local peers and the teachers, so there could be more understanding and acceptance. The strategies are not in conflict with one another and can be implemented together.

The headteachers and teachers from both schools mentioned 'teaching the pupils about Hong Kong, personal hygiene, classroom and school rules on an irregular basis'. The schools' informal curriculum attempted to help the pupils fit into the education system and conform to what is expected. In this aspect, the schools performed what Dimmock & Walker (2005) refer to as the socialization function that prepares the pupils to integrate in schools and into Hong Kong society.

Representation of different ethnicities in the curriculum was limited. According to the teachers, it was mainly represented in those that were already in the textbooks, such as costumes of different ethnic groups in General Studies, and sushi in the English textbooks. It was observed that the children's work and the displays posted around the schools did not show any trace of a multicultural approach or celebration of ethnic differences.

The multicultural curriculum in the schools is an extra add-on to the existing curriculum. It is tentative and has not penetrated into the existing curriculum. It is at an early stage, moving towards what Banks (2002, 2004) describes as Level 1 or the contributions approach.

One major problem noticed is the negation of the children's previous education. Except for the pupils' English skills, the schools did not make use of their existing knowledge, and were not interested to find out. Knowledge and concepts that the pupils had learnt previously in their mother tongue would be easier to learn in English and Chinese. The pupils had learnt to write essays in Nepal. This skill could aid the development of their writing skills once they had grasped the language basics.

Learning the minority languages

Both schools had made preliminary provision to teach the major minority group's mother tongue as an extra curricula activity. Arranging it as extra-curriculum means the schools have more flexibility to make changes, and the teachers do not have to be qualified. School A had provided Nepali lessons on Saturday mornings for a short time. The class stopped when the teacher left and they could not find a replacement. School B provided Urdu lessons as one of the interest class. Urdu is one of the common languages spoken by the Indian, the Pakistani and the Nepalese. It was taught by the Pakistani teaching assistant, who reported that the class was well received and the classroom was always packed.

Discussion

Much focus of the school curriculum is placed on the language of instruction in the different subjects, and teaching the pupils basic Chinese. School B provided classes on English. There is some attempt to provide the pupils with an adapted curriculum in different subjects. The schools' usual strategy is to simplify the English language used in these textbooks designed for native speakers. There does not seem to be strategic plans

for the Nepalese pupils to access the full curriculum, to raise their achievement against defined targets, or to develop the curriculum based on the goals and framework of the curriculum promoted by the EMB.

Since every school develops its own curriculum, the coverage of different subjects in different levels is likely to vary from school to school. It is difficult to determine how much of the full curriculum is accessible to the pupils. A central curriculum with clear stages is needed so pupils, parents and teachers are unambiguous about which stage the pupils are at.

6.4 Teaching and learning

Teaching a class of minority ethnic pupils is challenging. They are of different ethnic origins, have a variety of learning styles, learning history, subject knowledge, and language competence. In the two schools, the teachers deployed to teach the NCS pupils did not necessarily have the relevant subject training. Any teacher was assumed to be able to teach them. The English language support programmes for the NCS pupils, for example the summer preparation class in School B, were taught by the teaching assistants who had no teacher training.

In the area of pedagogy, the teachers had a lot of autonomy. The headteachers of both schools had left that to the discretion of individual teachers and the subject panels. The teachers' usual strategy was English translation, and competition games to maintain their attention and interest.

In School B, all subjects except Chinese were taught in English, and the headteacher gave his teachers the professional autonomy in their lessons:

'There is no specific school policy on how to teach the NCS pupils. The teachers use their professional judgment and make adjustments according to the special

situation of their particular class. If the Chinese in that particular class is very weak, the teacher may use more English to help. Otherwise they speak more Chinese.'

In general, the teachers in School B used Chinese supplemented with English to teach Chinese. They said that would let the NCS pupils have more chances to listen to Chinese:

'I try to teach mostly in Chinese, sometimes supplemented with a little English. If they still don't understand, occasionally I ask some children in the class to translate.'

The teachers in School A were more than willing to share their teaching methods which they had learnt on the job. The headteacher also taught Chinese to a group of Nepalese pupils. The following quotes were from teachers who taught Nepalese-only groups:

'I teach them basic reading – word recognition. I use strategies like picture and word matching. Writing is their major problem. I teach them the different parts that make up the characters. I spend more time on reading. If they know more words, it would help. The children help one another. In the first term, I mainly teach them to read. In the second term, I use Primary one textbook.'

'There are 3 levels in my class – P.4-6. I usually find areas that are occurring in all 3 levels so I can teach them together.' (talking about teaching Math)

The following are quotes from teachers who teach in mixed ethnic classrooms in which both Nepalese and Chinese pupils study together. The English teacher's job seemed the easiest, and the Chinese teacher had the most challenging job, and again her main strategy was English translation:

'There's no need for special arrangement. I teach them the usual way.' (English teacher)

'I have 10 Nepalese and 4 Chinese in my P.2 class. 2 of the Nepalese pupils have almost no Chinese. I have to translate word by word and it's very demanding.'
(Chinese teacher)

Although the Chinese teacher had only 14 pupils in her class, there was so much individual difference that the learning of all pupils was likely to suffer. But if the 2 Nepalese pupils were withdrawn and taught separately, it required extra resources. This shows that although a small school may be able to give pupils more individual attention but providing the necessary support is expensive.

In School B, it was observed that teachers wrote the sound of the Chinese characters in English, and children copied these in their books. This may help the pupils to remember the pronunciation of individual words but the teachers' arbitrary acoustic mnemonics is not based on existing phonetic systems.

A similar situation was observed in School A, but the English mnemonics were not provided by the teachers. Several children had marked their books with English and Nepali words. A boy explained that he used English to write the meaning and Nepali for the sound to help him remember the Chinese words. The pupils needed some kind of mnemonics to help them remember the lessons, and some had come up with their own learning strategies. This shows they had developed metacognitive and problem-solving skills, and were capable of higher academic achievement.

In both schools, pupils' everyday school work was looked at, and most of it was done with a lot of care. The Chinese homework was mainly copying practice. There was little intellectual challenge or meaningful exercise in context. The pupils' school work in all subjects was almost error free. There could be many reasons for this, such as help from private tutors. There was a lot of expectation on the private tutors to help the pupils complete their homework. For example:

'If they have private tutors, they can hand in their homework.'

It is an odd phenomenon for private tutors to have a critical role between the pupils and the teachers, and they seemed to have taken up the role of the parents. Further study in the classroom process in the teaching and learning of minority ethnic pupils should be useful and interesting.

6.5 Working with parents

In schools that successfully raise the achievement of the minority ethnic pupils, a high priority is placed on building a strong link with parents (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003; Dimmock et al. 2004; OFSTED 2002a; Tikly et al. 2004). But many minority parents seemed not interested in their children's schooling. Gibson (1991) has contended that this is because they do not want to take any chances that may jeopardize their children's education opportunity.

In the two schools, the Nepalese parents were not involved as equal partners in the education of their children. Communication was mostly one way, and mainly in the form of circulars or notes written in the pupils' handbook. School circulars were written in English, and for important circulars, the translator or teaching assistants might follow up and explained on the phone. In School B, because they had about 300 NCS pupils, they held a parents' meeting for the parents of the new pupils every year:

'We have a meeting with the parents at the beginning of the term and inform them of our expectations, some procedures and the school rules. During the year we communicate through the Pupils' Handbook.'

The meeting at the beginning of the school year served the function of informing the parents about the school rules, what was expected from the pupils and the parents, and how things were done here.

Everyday communication between the schools and the parents was mainly through the translator (in School A) and minority teaching assistants (in School B). When the pupils failed to return a circular signed by the parents, when they failed to finish the homework, when they did not pay some fees, when they took casual absence or were always late for school, the translator or teaching assistants called the parents. Then the parents signed the circulars, paid the fees, employed a tutor or scolded the pupils. Communication discontinued until the next problem arose.

The teachers were asked if they suggested to the parents how they could help their children with their study. Senior teachers involved with the teaching of the pupils replied:

'No, I don't call them (the parents). I can't communicate with them.'

'No, I don't call the parents and suggest how they can help their children. If they have any problems, they can ask the teaching assistants.'

The school circulars were written in English and parents were assumed to be able to read them. But some teachers cited the language barrier for not communicating with the parents. And in general, the telephone communication seemed to focus more on negative messages.

The headteachers and teachers commented that the NCS parents were not enthusiastic about school activities. They were indifferent about school matters. They did not participate in the schools as volunteers, and there were only one or two minorities who participated as executive members of the parent-teacher association. Parents only participated in the main activities like parents' day, parent-child school picnic and graduation day:

'Parents only come to school on things that involve their children. They participate in school's activities like outings and graduation day.'

In the previous chapter, lack of parental support is identified as a major barrier to pupils' school achievement. But the schools seemed to believe that the parents were unable to support their children's learning, other than employing tutors. They did not have any strategies in place to teach the parents how to help their children. As long as the parents cooperated with the school, such as signing circulars, paying fees, and making sure their children attend school, all was well. Apart from the information meeting at the beginning of the school year and the student handbook, there were no established channels for communication and parental involvement with the schools was kept to a minimum.

Minority ethnic pupils learning in a foreign system need the psychological support at home to persevere, face challenges and solve problems. Families can help to contradict negative messages and reinforce more positive ones (Nieto 1999). If parents are to be the schools' partners in supporting their children's learning, they should have a more active role in the communication with the schools. And schools need to help parents to help their children.

6.6 Leadership

This section on the leadership of the two schools focuses on the leadership performed by the headteachers. The headteachers were asked about their vision for their schools, their decision-making process in admission of the NCS pupils, and their perception of their personal leadership style. The teachers, teaching assistants, parents and pupils were not asked specifically for their views of the headteachers.

Values and equal opportunities

Research findings suggest the headteachers in schools that successfully raise the achievement of their minority ethnic pupils are values-driven and proactive (Dimmock et al. 2004; Henze & ARC 2000; Walker 2004). They emphasize equal opportunities for all

pupils and communicate this vision, high expectation, and equality values to the pupils, teachers and parents (Blair 2002; Tikly et al. 2004).

In the two schools studied, however, the headteachers were proactive but not necessarily subscribed to the values of equal opportunity. Although the EMB has recommended schools to formulate their equality policy, both headteachers believed such policy was not necessary. They claimed racial discrimination was not a concern. The teachers did not discriminate and children disputes were individual incidents. The school was safe and the pupils were learning.

Equality of opportunity was not reflected in the two schools' policy and practices. There was no evidence of promoting positive race relations, or a whole school approach to raise the expectation and achievement of the minority ethnic pupils. Maybe this is because their admission of the pupils was primarily a school survival strategy. In both schools, the headteachers seemed to subscribe to the predominant values of the 'pragmatists' (Law et al. 2003), because they were more concerned about pupils numbers and solving problems that emerged in the process, rather than equality values. And these pragmatic focuses had become the schools' predominant values.

(b) Leadership style and the decision-making process

The headteachers were proactive, decisive and innovative. Their decision-making style was more 'hard' than 'soft' (Blair 2002). Important decisions were made by the headteachers themselves and they enjoyed relative autonomy. They made the decision to admit the NCS pupils, and then informed the School Management Committee (SMC). There was no discussion or consultation with the teachers, school managers and parents in the process. The headteacher of School B described the process:

'I decided to admit the NCS pupils. Later I informed the school managers in the SMC meeting and told the teachers in a staff meeting (...) No, I have not heard of any complaints from the teachers. This is the school's decision to admit NCS pupils

and the pupils have the right to study in this school according to the law. They cannot object to it (...) I told the parents in the Parent-Teacher Association Committee. There's no need to discuss with them. We are the professionals.'

He was the 'school'. He had put the pros and cons on the table and decided the NCS pupils could save the school. After making the critical decision, he informed the stakeholders. The NCS pupils' 'right to study' and the 'law' were mentioned to support his decision. He considered himself a proactive leader and open to change:

'I'm open, proactive, and responsive to change. I practice a learning style of leadership. I can accept new things. I believe in continuous development and improvement. I always think of new things instead of repeat what other schools are doing. Our school should have its own characteristics.'

Admitting the NCS pupils involved a lot of policy and practice changes. The headteachers discussed and consulted with their senior teachers after they had made the decision. The headteacher of School A took up the major leadership role and worked with her teachers:

'I come up with most of the strategies myself. Others came up during discussion with the teachers. I don't think up everything in one go. When problems arise, I try to find the strategies and solutions.'

The headteacher of School B delegated the coordinating job and curriculum leadership to his senior teachers. He had a teacher who gave him a lot of help initially:

'A senior teacher who has now retired, worked closely with me and helped me to make the necessary preparations during the summer vacation, especially the translation work.'

Both headteachers are instructional leaders (see *Section 3.3, Leadership*) and perform leadership in their schools' curriculum. Although School A was facing closure in the near future, the headteacher had plans to use what she had learnt to continue organizing support to help the Nepalese pupils in the local community. One of her plans was to design a Chinese curriculum for children who were second language learners.

6.7 A learning school

Teachers and staff in a learning school are open-minded in piloting new initiatives to support the learning of the pupils (Tikly et al. 2004). As discussed above, the headteachers of both case-study schools are flexible and responsive to the external environment and innovative in their practices to accommodate the minority ethnic pupils. However, it is essential that the whole school is committed to a learning culture (Pang 2006). In the two schools, new ideas and decision-making are still concentrated on the headteachers and a few senior teachers (see *Section 6.2 The Chinese curriculum* and *Section 6.5(b) Leadership style and the decision-making process*), and some individual teachers are learning by doing. A learning culture has not permeated in the schools.

Learning schools are prepared to listen to the views of their stakeholders (Tikly et al. 2004). In both schools, communication with parents was mainly one way (see *Section 6.4*), and there were no established channels to invite views from them. The schools seemed not to have elicited views from the parents and their children concerning their needs and how the schools could better help them. It seems that from the perspective of the schools, it is the pupils' responsibility to fit into the system. Considering the above, the schools' learning culture has yet to be developed.

6.8 The EMB's supportive mechanisms to the schools

The main needs of School A include funding, manpower, learning materials, and curriculum expertise. But it did not receive any training or other forms of support from the EMB. Apart from the one-off School-based Support Grant, the school did not receive extra funding. This shows that schools that are not one of those with a significant number of minority ethnic pupils do not necessarily benefit from the EMB's supportive mechanisms, even when their minority ethnic pupils are not small in number. Schools with a few of these pupils are likely to have to rely solely on their own resources and initiatives.

School B received more support from the EMB than School A, probably because it was on the school list for minority pupils. In addition to the School-based Support Grant, it received funding to provide pupils with a bridging programme during the summer vacation. Curriculum officers visited the school regularly to support their Mathematics curriculum development. It had joined the support network organized by the EMB, and the teachers attended the sharing sessions. Despite all these, the school still considered EMB's support inadequate to support their needs, especially funding.

6.9 Summary

This chapter has discussed the schools' administrative strategies, the curriculum, teaching and learning, the leadership, and working with parents. Equality values do not underlie these different areas. The leadership in schools, similar to the leadership in the territory considered it sufficient for the minority ethnic pupils to achieve equal opportunity at 'equal access', and did not subscribe to the higher level of 'equal share' (Arora 2005: 6) (see *Section 3.2*). This value was communicated to and shared among the teachers and the staff. Perhaps for this reason, there did not seem to be a strong sense of commitment towards significantly raising the achievement of the minority pupils in the schools.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which the policies and practices the schools employed are effective because they are not substantiated by systematic monitoring and record of pupil achievement data. It would be fair to say that the policies and practices are probably effective to a certain extent and there is potential to be better utilized. There is much to learn and refine in the process. But, without commitment to a higher level of equality values, pupils and parents are unlikely to be involved as partners in deciding how best to support the learning of the pupils.

The EMB claims to have provided various supportive mechanisms to the schools that admit them. However, the two schools mainly resorted to their own strategies and did not use the teaching resources posted on the EMB website. The effectiveness of the sharing and training sessions is uncertain as the schools are in competition with one another. The funding provided by the EMB is far from sufficient to cover the salary of extra staff. Without extra funding, schools have to deploy other funding to cater for the minority pupils, and may affect the schools' work in other areas. It can be concluded that the EMB's support mechanisms are high in rhetoric but insufficient to meet the needs of the schools.

The next chapter considers the issues and implications of the findings in this and the previous chapter. Minority ethnic education in Hong Kong is loaded with improvement needs. It is also a rich field that is under-researched. In this final chapter I will discuss what is learnt in this study and make recommendations to the different stakeholders and suggest areas for further research.

Chapter 7 Concluding thoughts and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I will draw the findings together in relation to the research questions set out in chapter one, make recommendations and suggest areas for further research. Although this study is on the achievement, barriers and education needs of the Nepalese pupils, many of the recommendations can be applied to include pupils of other minority ethnic pupils. Before giving a summary of the main findings, it may be useful to revisit the research questions, which are:

- (a) How well are the pupils of Nepalese origin performing in the case study schools relative to the performance of other pupils?
- (b) What are the barriers to achievement of this group of pupils, if any?
- (c) What are their education needs?
- (d) What examples of good practice exist in the case study schools for raising the achievement of pupils of Nepalese origin and for meeting their education needs?

7.2 Summary of the major findings in the study

This section answers the four research questions, drawing on some of the literature discussed in Chapter 3 and the main findings in Chapters 5 and 6. It consists of four parts: (a) the performance of the Nepalese pupils in the case study schools; (b) their barriers to achievement and education needs; (c) the schools' policy and practices; and (d) other findings.

Performance of the Nepalese pupils in the case study schools

- (a) There is a lack of performance data on the school level and territory level;

- (b) There is no reliable evidence to substantiate the performance of the Nepalese pupils or to compare their performance with that of pupils of other ethnic origins;
- (c) The Nepalese pupils' achievement depends on individual effort, and is negotiated by the school's policies and practices and the wider political contexts;
- (d) Much emphasis on their achievement is placed on Chinese, although the pupils seem to be underachieving in other subjects, including Mathematics and English;
- (e) Their performance in other aspects such as 21st century skills (MacGilchrist et al. 2004) is not recognized;
- (f) Despite the lack of performance data, however, and considering the pupils' many barriers to achievement, they are likely to be underachieving.

Their barriers to achievement and education needs

The barriers and education needs reported here are general rather than specific. They are not necessarily applicable to all the Nepalese pupils in the study (e.g. low socio-economic background), and it is likely that some of them are applicable to pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. Although there is a lot of focus on Chinese both as a barrier and education need, the Nepalese pupils have other significant barriers. Some of their barriers are similar to findings in countries where English is the major language of communication (see *Session 3.3*):

- (a) Lack of language: In Hong Kong, this includes both English and Chinese.
- (b) Low socio-economic background of pupils' families;
- (c) Discrimination in the form of low teacher expectation; and
- (d) Peer race related bullying in varying degrees.

Some barriers are specific to the Hong Kong situation. According to local literature (e.g. Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004; YMMSS 2000) and findings from the interviews, these include:

- (a) Indirect discrimination, e.g. the mother-tongue policy in secondary schools;

- (b) Parents' lack of information about schools and the education system;
- (c) Limited school choice and access;
- (d) Poor education quality of some schools;
- (e) A fragmented curriculum;
- (f) Lack of systematic long term support policies that cater for minority ethnic pupils in the education system.

The education needs of the Nepalese pupils identified in this study are:

- (a) English and Chinese language;
- (b) Continuous and systematic support to help them adapt in school and society;
- (c) Parental support;
- (d) A holistic curriculum that effectively enables them to achieve to their potential;
and
- (e) Social integration.

The schools' policy and practices

Both schools do not have a specific multicultural policy, but because of the significant proportion of these minority ethnic pupils, the schools' policy in most aspects, such as year plan, have taken them into consideration. Similar to other research findings reported in Chapter 3, the two case-study schools adopt a blend of approaches to support their minority ethnic pupils. In School A, the approaches target pupils from Nepalese origin as they are the major ethnic minority. In School B, the approaches target the minority ethnic pupils in general. These approaches show local characteristics:

Values and leadership

The leadership values underlying the two schools are those of the pragmatists (Law et al. 2004). Much of the schools' focus is on administrative strategies to facilitate the admission of their minority ethnic pupils, such as employing different pupil groupings for

different subjects. There is strong leadership of the headteachers in major decision-making, with teacher involvement in other decisions, which is a modification of Blair's (1998) 'hard' and 'soft' strategies.

The schools' supportive strategies

This study set out to ask the question: Which type of school arrangement is the most suitable for the Nepalese pupils? Is a big or a small school more suitable? A separate English stream or mixing them with the Chinese pupils or separate for some lessons and put together in others? How are the mainstream schools accommodating them? The answer is: there are no best practices that suit every school. It depends on a number of influencing factors such as school context, parental preference, individual aptitude, plans about staying or leaving Hong Kong, and age when the pupils join the system.

The two schools largely rely on their own initiatives and strategies to support their minority ethnic pupils. They are guided by their beliefs of how the children learn best. Each school believes their blend of approaches is effective in their particular contexts. School A's major supportive mechanism is the 'cross level subject setting' arrangement. The small size of the school provides it with the flexibility that facilitates this arrangement. School B's major supportive mechanism is to create an English stream because they have sufficient pupil number.

The school curriculum

The existing full primary curriculum for all pupils is limited. It focuses almost exclusively on language and Mathematics at the expense of other higher order skills (see *Section 2.3*), but the Nepalese pupils do not even have access to this full curriculum. In the two schools, the curriculum design and language of instruction for minority ethnic pupils is mostly school-based. It is informed by the headteachers and the curriculum leaders' personal theories about learning. The EMB provides some consultancy service but does not monitor the quality of their school-based curricula. Since most teachers are

not curriculum experts and have a heavy workload, the school-based curricula may be unsatisfactory. This would affect the achievement of NCS pupils including the Nepalese.

The Chinese school-based curriculum for minority pupils does not follow a clear structure or syllabus and there appears to be controversy as to whether Cantonese or Putonghua is more suitable for the NCS pupils. There is some attempt to provide a multi-cultural curriculum in both schools, although it is at an early level and has not penetrated into the school curriculum (Banks 2002, 2004).

Teaching and learning

Apart from some sharing sessions, the teachers have no training in teaching minority ethnic pupils, teaching in multi-ethnic classrooms, special education training, or teaching Chinese as a second language to young learners. School B employs minority teaching assistants. They teach the pupils and bridge the communication gap with the parents. Apart from the teachers and teaching assistants, private tutors seem to play an important role in teaching the Nepalese pupils at home.

According to the respondents, the Nepalese pupils are learning and making progress. However, the target of their learning seems to be set at catching up with their local peers, or in a CMI secondary school. Their previous learning in Nepal is not valued or used to facilitate their new learning.

Working with parents

Parents are expected to work with the schools and support the schools' policies. Everyday communication is conducted through the teaching assistants/translator and pupil handbook. Circulars are written in English. Parents who cannot read English need to find people to explain the circulars for them. Parents participate in major school functions such as parents' day and school picnics.

Other findings:

Equality of opportunity

Nepalese pupils are not enjoying equality of opportunity in the public education system. They do not enjoy equal opportunity to be admitted into a school or to succeed in school. The case-study schools do not consider it necessary to have an equality policy.

The EMB's supportive mechanisms

The EMB's official list of supportive mechanisms to schools (see *Section 2.5*) lack practical substance because most of them are existing funding and practices. All schools, whether they have minority ethnic pupils or not receive the funding. The only extra funding that the schools receive is the School-based Support Scheme Grant (HK\$2,633 in 2006/07 per pupil). Some schools may receive funding for running Bridging Programmes or Initiation Programmes. Both schools did not perceive much substantial support from the EMB.

The induction programme which aims to facilitate the pupils' adaptation in the schools and in Hong Kong is not fully utilized, and is considered dispensable by parents and schools.

Lack of achievement data

The lack of achievement data has exposed an important problem in the system. It is difficult to assess and report the achievement of all groups of pupils, including local Chinese children. Without achievement data, issues and problems are messy. It is not possible to design appropriate strategies to target areas for improvement. The latest DfES research (2006) has identified the complexity of factors that influence achievement, and employed a Contextual Value Added approach in using data to support learning. Hong

Kong's education statistics (EC 2004) on the other hand, reports data at a superficial level that cannot be used for the improvement of education.

Social integration

Nepalese pupils who study with local children seem to be better integrated although they seem to prefer their own ethnic groups and there are reports of discrimination. In some schools, Nepalese pupils as well as pupils from other ethnic origins are semi-segregated by having an English stream especially created for them. In schools that mainly cater for the ethnic minorities, they are segregated from the local pupils. The segregated arrangements affect their integration into society in the long term, and constrain their opportunity to use Chinese.

Positive identity and self-esteem

The pupils do not seem to suffer from identity problem or low self-esteem, despite their minority status in school and society. They exhibit traits of 'immigrant minorities' (Gibson & Ogbu 1991), which enables them to be tolerant about the difficulties in their environment, and motivates some pupils to persevere in school.

7.3 Recommendations to schools

One of the aims of education is to help the disadvantaged groups break out of the poverty cycle. This generation of Nepalese pupils should have an equal chance to succeed as the average local children. At present, much needs to be done to achieve this aim. The following recommendations are suitable for schools with minority ethnic pupils, not limited to the Nepalese:

Values, race prejudice and low expectations

Schools need to develop into caring communities where children from different ethnic origins learn together. As a first step, teachers and school leaders need to examine their own values to identify if they nurture equality and democratic values (Landsman 2004; Walker 2004), and whether there is conscious and unconscious stereotyping of different ethnic groups (Cunningham et al. 2004). It is established that ‘teacher expectations play a crucial role in academic achievement’ (Blair 2004: 46). Teachers should believe all pupils can achieve (Ovando 2004) whatever their ethnicity is, and raise their expectations and standards for all groups of pupils (Nieto 1999).

Schools should have a clear policy of equality, and practices that value their pupils of different ethnic origins. For example, announcements should be bilingual in both English and Chinese; and minority ethnic pupils should take up responsible roles in the school. The policy of equality should be communicated to all the staff, pupils and their parents.

The school supportive strategies

Although the findings in this and other studies can provide schools with information for reference, individual schools need to experiment and find the strategies most effective in their particular contexts. Some may put more focus on catering for certain needs, for example, families that plan to leave Hong Kong in a few years, or those that plan to stay. With more school information available to the parents, they can choose a school that best meets their needs.

The school curriculum

Hong Kong is part of the global world. Schools with or without minority ethnic pupils should incorporate a multicultural perspective into their existing curriculum. The school curriculum for NCS pupils should be well planned. It needs to have a holistic framework,

complete with targets and aims, objectives, content and methods of assessment for each level.

Designing a quality curriculum for NCS pupils requires a lot of work, time, resources, experience and expertise. Teachers from different schools, tertiary institutes and curriculum experts from the CDI should collaborate and work together.

Teachers and learning

Schools should deploy experienced and trained teachers to teach the minority ethnic pupils. The pupils in the study have reported difficulty with Mathematics and Social Studies which are taught in English. Teachers deployed to teach the minority ethnic pupils should possess a competent level of English to be able to explain concepts clearly. The bilingual teaching assistants can help in the classroom and provide after school learning support. Minority ethnic pupils and the teaching assistants can provide mentoring for the newcomers.

Our present system allocates pupils to different levels according to their age group rather than base on their performance. The Nepalese pupils should achieve more if they are taught according to their level, modeling on School A's 'cross subject setting' approach. They can then be promoted when they have achieved the targets of the level.

All human beings learn in different ways and we possess multiple kinds of intelligence. The Nepalese pupils and pupils from other minority ethnic origins bring with them intelligences and learning styles that may be different but not inferior to the learning styles of Chinese pupils. For example, the ability to answer essay questions and tackling multiple choice questions are different examination techniques that both the Nepalese and Chinese pupils need to learn to master. Schools should make use of the minority ethnic pupils' existing knowledge to help them learn. There is much that the local children and children from other ethnic origins can learn from one another. We may all benefit when

teachers value the contribution of these children and recognize and teach to multiple modes of learning.

Achievement monitoring

Pupils enter school with different levels of existing knowledge, skills and competence. Schools can assess them and obtain the baseline data on their performance when they enter school. Then they can use this data to inform their planning. An individual progress plan and achievement monitoring should help to raise the achievement of individual pupils. For example, an individual progress plan should raise the effectiveness of the 'cross level subject setting' approach.

Social integration

Nepalese pupils and children from other minority ethnic origins need to integrate in schools and society in the long run. Even when it is necessary to create an English stream for them, schools should arrange regular opportunities for them to learn with their local peers. For example, this can be done through reading workshops or project work.

In a diverse society like Hong Kong, perhaps we should aim at giving all children, including local and minority children access to information and learn about different cultures and practices; so they learn to value, respect, understand their own and others' diverse cultures and live together in harmony.

Link with parents

Schools need to take a more active role in improving the communication with the minority ethnic parents and involving them in the schools' activities. Many Nepalese parents know little about the education in Hong Kong. Schools can help parents to develop a support network to help them deal with their child's learning and adaptation problems (Murphy 2004a). Schools can teach the parents about how to support their

children's learning. Epstein's (Hidalgo et al. 2004) suggestions could be adapted for use according to the context of individual schools.

The school circulars should be translated into the pupils' mother tongue wherever possible. This conveys respect for the parents and their culture. Teachers should take an active role to communicate with the parents instead of leaving most of the responsibility to the teaching assistants. Pupils could act as translators in parent-teacher formal and informal meetings.

School attendance

Both schools reported that the school attendance of Nepalese pupils is satisfactory, while some ethnic groups often take casual absence. Better communication with the parents and support from them should help to alleviate this problem.

Secondary schools

The headteachers and teachers in the study considered it easier for minority ethnic groups such as the Nepalese, Indian, Pakistani and Filipinos to study through English. EMI secondary schools should be flexible with their admission criteria, such as giving these children exemption for Chinese at entry. They could arrange for them to learn an alternative Chinese curriculum, which extends beyond the initial stages. Admitting minority ethnic pupils in the schools provide authentic opportunities for pupils to learn about and live with people who are different and should benefit all pupils.

Recruitment of teachers and staff from minority ethnic background

Schools with or without minority ethnic pupils should target some teachers and staff from minority ethnic background in their recruitment. This would provide an authentic situation for the pupils and teachers to know, accept, and work with people who are

different. This would also provide employment outlets for the minorities and motivate the minority ethnic pupils to work hard.

7.4 Recommendations to the EMB and the Government

Leadership role of the EMB

The EMB needs to take a leadership role in the education of ethnic minorities, instead of leaving the bulk of the responsibility to the schools. The present supportive mechanisms are fragmented and lack long term commitment. An obvious example is the small one-off School-based Support Scheme Grant. Since minority ethnic pupils will continue to participate in the Hong Kong education system, the EMB should formulate long term plans to cater for them. The EMB should consult schools and the minority communities to learn from their knowledge and experience before they formulate their plans.

Minorities are known to have difficulty accessing information (Loper & Unison Hong Kong 2004). The EMB should take the lead to improve communication with them. The EMB should inform the public of major changes in their minority ethnic policy instead of posting them on the internet to be discovered by those who may need the information. For example, many minority ethnic parents may not be aware of the long term effect of kindergarten education. The EMB should encourage parents to enroll their children in kindergarten and inform them of the government's Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme³⁴. The designated weekly radio programmes (*Footnote 23*) can be utilized for such purposes.

³⁴ The Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme provides fee subsidy to help eligible parents pay for their children's kindergarten school fees. It is launched in the 2007-08 school year.

Leadership in schools

Headteachers have an important role in achieving race equality in their schools (Blair 2004). The EMB should equip headteachers and school leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary for working in multi-ethnic schools. School leaders should be convinced of the usefulness of the induction programmes and not to admit pupils who need them but have not attended them.

The EMB should help schools to build the capacity for continuous learning so as to better meet the ever-increasing diverse needs of the pupils. Some schools seem to refuse to enroll minority ethnic pupils. The EMB should help the school leaders understand their legal obligations.

Equal treatment and racial discrimination

The EMB should revise its equality of opportunity policy. It should officially include pupils from different ethnic origins, not just pupils with special education needs in the policy. The EMB should formulate clear guidelines, suggest areas and practices, and provide examples for school references. The EMB could advise schools on setting 'phased targets' and 'year-on-year targets' (DfES 2004b: 3) to help their minority ethnic pupils work towards achieving the full curriculum.

The repeated claim that minority ethnic children are not 'singled out' for the sake of equality treatment (Chan 2005b) is a limited interpretation of equality. It is commonly agreed that these pupils do not enjoy equality of opportunity in our education system (e.g. Chan 2005b; EOC 2006; Xia 2006; Teng 2005). The EMB should recognize that equal treatment is a necessary but insufficient condition; opening of the schools to the minorities is not the same as equal access and participation, and equal access is a long way from achieving equality of opportunity in outcome (see *Section 3.2*). It should be established as one of the long term goals in the public education system for every child to have the equal chance to succeed.

The Consultative Paper on racial discrimination was proposed in 2004 (see *Session 2.5*). The government should speed up the Bill's legislative process; and more importantly, educate the public on equality and discrimination.

Quality of education

The EMB should investigate the education quality of some schools including those attended by minority ethnic pupils that are known to offer a substandard quality of education and where there is a lot of fighting. The EMB should provide targeted support to enable these schools to improve their quality and give them time to improve the situation.

School support

Funding

Schools need predictable and continuous funding to formulate plans to support their disadvantaged groups, among them the ethnic minorities. These plans need to sustain for an extended period of time to be effective.

Curriculum

The EMB should provide teaching and curriculum experts to work with teachers at least at the initial stages³⁵. A key role for the EMB would be to identify and disseminate effective practice in this area as well as in strategies to raise the pupils' achievement. In the long run, the CDI needs to design a central curriculum of the main subjects for non-Chinese speaking pupils. This can start in primary and gradually move up to a diploma level. Schools can use the central curriculum or use it as a basis for adaptation. The

³⁵ The EMB has designated 10 primary schools for learning and teaching support of NCS pupils in the 2006/07 school year.

curriculum may be one with some bilingual support in the pupils' mother tongue initially. Then it will gradually develop into one for pupils whose major language of learning is English, or alternatively one for pupils who would learn in Chinese. As there are clearly defined stages, pupils who change schools will be able to continue with the curriculum.

The present primary curriculum narrowly focuses on basic facts and knowledge, language and Mathematics. The EMB should reform the curriculum with reference to its Seven Learning Goals and MacGilchrist et al.'s (2004) definition of achievement so as to better prepare all pupils for a future that values the ability to learn other than memorizing facts. The new curriculum should include a multicultural aspect that teaches pupils about different cultures and to accept and respect others. Teacher assessments should reflect the reformed curriculum.

School network

The EMB should help schools with minority ethnic pupils to form networks. The schools could share resources, strategies, practices, and experience to raise the pupils' achievement. Schools that have a significant number of minority pupils could partner with those that have a small number of pupils.

Support for the children

The induction programme

The EMB needs to evaluate the effectiveness of the induction programme and research on its long term effects in improving the achievement of the minority ethnic pupils. There should be central screening to decide which pupils need to attend an induction programme and which pupils can attend schools directly. For pupils who are assessed to need the induction programmes, their parents should be explained about the short and long term benefits and encouraged to enroll their children.

Chinese classes

The EMB should run weekend and evening Chinese classes at different levels for non-Chinese speakers³⁶. Minority ethnic pupils in primary, secondary and those who have left school can have the chance to improve their Chinese. English evening classes have been run under government subsidy for decades. The learning of Chinese has every reason to be promoted in a Chinese territory.

Putonghua should be taught in schools and in these classes for several reasons: (1) the spoken form and the written form are the same; therefore it does not cause confusion as in Cantonese. (2) It has a standard phonetic system, and should facilitate learning. (3) Spoken Cantonese is rich in the environment and can be picked up relatively easily. (4) Putonghua is the national language and should be more useful to non-native speakers.

Provision for special needs

The government should make provision for minority ethnic pupils with special needs. These pupils are expensive to support and schools may not have the resource to help them. Teachers may not identify their special needs initially because of their language difficulties, and help from experts is necessary.

Data collection and achievement monitoring

The EMB needs to collect data of different ethnic groups in the schools and monitor their achievement. Based on the collected data on minority ethnic composition and characteristics, the EMB can formulate a comprehensive and effective multiethnic policy, and set achievement targets at different levels. The EMB could also provide support and guidance for schools to integrate targets for their minority ethnic pupils into their school development plans.

³⁶ It has been proposed that the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research will develop a Workplace Chinese Programme for the NCS group outside the school system (Press Release 2006). The schedule is not specified.

7.5 Recommendations to the teacher training institutes

Teachers and headteachers have an important role in pupils' learning. The existing teacher training programmes emphasize the training of pedagogy and subject knowledge. The attitude and values of teachers in training should not be overlooked although it is difficult to assess.

Curriculum for the future

To prepare our pupils adequately for the future, our teacher training programmes need to have a curriculum that is future oriented and globalize in perspective. A curriculum that prepares the student teacher and in-service teacher for a multicultural classroom should be included. Pupils and teachers alike need to learn to accept people who are different from them.

Teaching for special needs

The training institutes should make 'teaching pupils with special needs' a core module in their training programme. All pupils have individual differences and teachers need to know the different strategies to support them.

Teachers need to learn how to differentiate between special education needs and other needs related to ethnicity, for example, language needs. Minority ethnic pupils are often wrongly labeled as having behavioral or learning difficulties, for example, when the issue may be language or discrimination or cultural differences (Tikly et al. 2004). Alternatively, their special education needs might be mistaken for language difficulties and not recognized.

Achievement data

Teachers need to be trained with the necessary skills to collect pupil achievement data, on how to make use of the data to plan their teaching, and monitor and support pupil learning. The main reason why teachers are not doing it at present is because they do not know how.

Teaching of Chinese as a second language

There should be a programme on the teaching of Chinese as a second or additional language, and the development of the curriculum for young learners.

Teacher training programmes in English

The teaching institutes should offer teacher training programmes that use English as the medium of instruction so minority ethnic people can have the chance to be trained and become qualified teachers; and they should have the opportunity to be trained to teach subjects other than English. There should also be programmes that teach primary school teachers to teach in English, so they can teach the subject content and concepts more effectively.

Leadership training

Leadership has a critical role in promoting diversity and race equality in schools. Leadership training programmes should include a module on multicultural perspective, values of equality, and promoting an equality culture in schools.

7.6 Suggestions for further research

Existing research into the education for minority ethnic children in Hong Kong is mostly concerned with their language needs and educational opportunities. There are a lot of assumptions and gaps in our knowledge at this stage. We need to learn more about the learning and teaching processes in the classroom, the pupils' performances in different learning areas at different key stages, curriculum development in different subjects, quality of education in the schools, learning Chinese as an additional language, learning styles of different ethnic groups, induction and support programmes, and working with minority ethnic parents of different ethnic origins. There can be quantitative, qualitative, as well as longitudinal qualitative research.

There are needs for comparative research. For example, comparative research on the relative achievement of minority ethnic pupils who learn in English and those in Chinese, and the relative achievement of different ethnic groups at different key stages and in different subjects is needed. Research that compares the achievement of minority groups in Hong Kong and in other countries would also be useful.

Some pupils have been relatively successful. Research into the causes of their success can contribute to our understanding why some pupils have been successful against the odds while others have failed. Social relation studies could be about the social interaction between the Chinese pupils and the minority ethnic pupils, between different minority groups, peer pressure in secondary schools, and teacher-pupil relationship.

Among the non-Chinese population, people from mixed heritage background forms the largest group (Census & Statistics Dept. 2001b). Who are they? What is the ethnic combination? And what are the education needs of these children? There remain many blanks and gaps in our understanding in these areas. It is our job as educators to find out how best we can help these minority ethnic pupils to achieve to their potential.

7.7 Final thoughts

A case study exploring issues concerning the achievement of minority ethnic children is not value neutral (Blair 1998). This study is formulated on the assumption that different levels of inequality exist in this group of children's education process for historical, political or social reasons. Nepalese children are children of a disadvantaged group in Hong Kong. Compared with other countries such as the U.K., the USA, and Singapore, Hong Kong is reluctant and lacking behind in its minority ethnic education policy. Unfortunately, Hong Kong is not learning from the experience and knowledge of other countries.

Most of the parents in the study are 'immigrant minorities' (Gibson & Ogbu 1991). To many of them, education is instrumental in helping their children break out of the poverty cycle. However, the EMB lacks genuine commitment to help these pupils integrate and succeed in the system. The core issue of this passivity is power. The Nepalese constituency has low socio-economic status and no power. Consequently, they are granted little attention and insufficient resources. Until the government amends its understanding of equality of opportunity to transcend beyond the basic level of access to outcome (Arora 2005), and support it with appropriate policies, there cannot be genuine equality of opportunity for the ethnic minorities in the territory.

7.8 Vignette of a Nepalese pupil

To understand how the Nepalese pupils experience the barriers, their education needs, and the effectiveness of the school's supportive mechanisms, let us imagine a ten-year old Nepalese boy named Jiban who came to Hong Kong to join his parents in September. He had no brothers or sisters. Both his parents worked in construction sites as daily workers. His father had asked his co-workers for the addresses of the schools near his home. He took Jiban to the schools on one of the days he had no work. They visited 2 schools and were told the term had already started and they would not be enrolling new

pupils until February but he could leave his name and address. Luckily, Jiban was accepted by the third school.

Jiban had not joined an induction programme either because his parents had not heard of it or they thought it was more useful to join a real school. The school term had started. Jiban had missed the school's bridging class in summer and attended the normal lessons immediately. He did not have a period of preparation. Jiban was an intelligent child but had only two years' of education in Nepal. He could speak Nepali and Urdu but neither English nor Chinese.

He was put in an English stream with other NCS pupils. The school put him in primary 4. He seemed to be the oldest child in the class and felt uncomfortable. He sat at the back of the classroom trying to make sense of the languages he heard, the words in the books, and what was going on around him. He had no idea what subjects he was learning except that he knew he had to study hard and the books cost a lot of money. He tried to copy the lines of the Chinese characters but the lines made no sense to him. They were not like the Nepali alphabets. He could not tell what they represented and what made them different. When everybody read, he 'read' with them. Usually the teacher read a short sentence, and they chanted after him/her. He could not associate the sounds with the words even though the teacher pointed to them when they chanted. They chanted the same paragraph for a week and then they learnt a new paragraph.

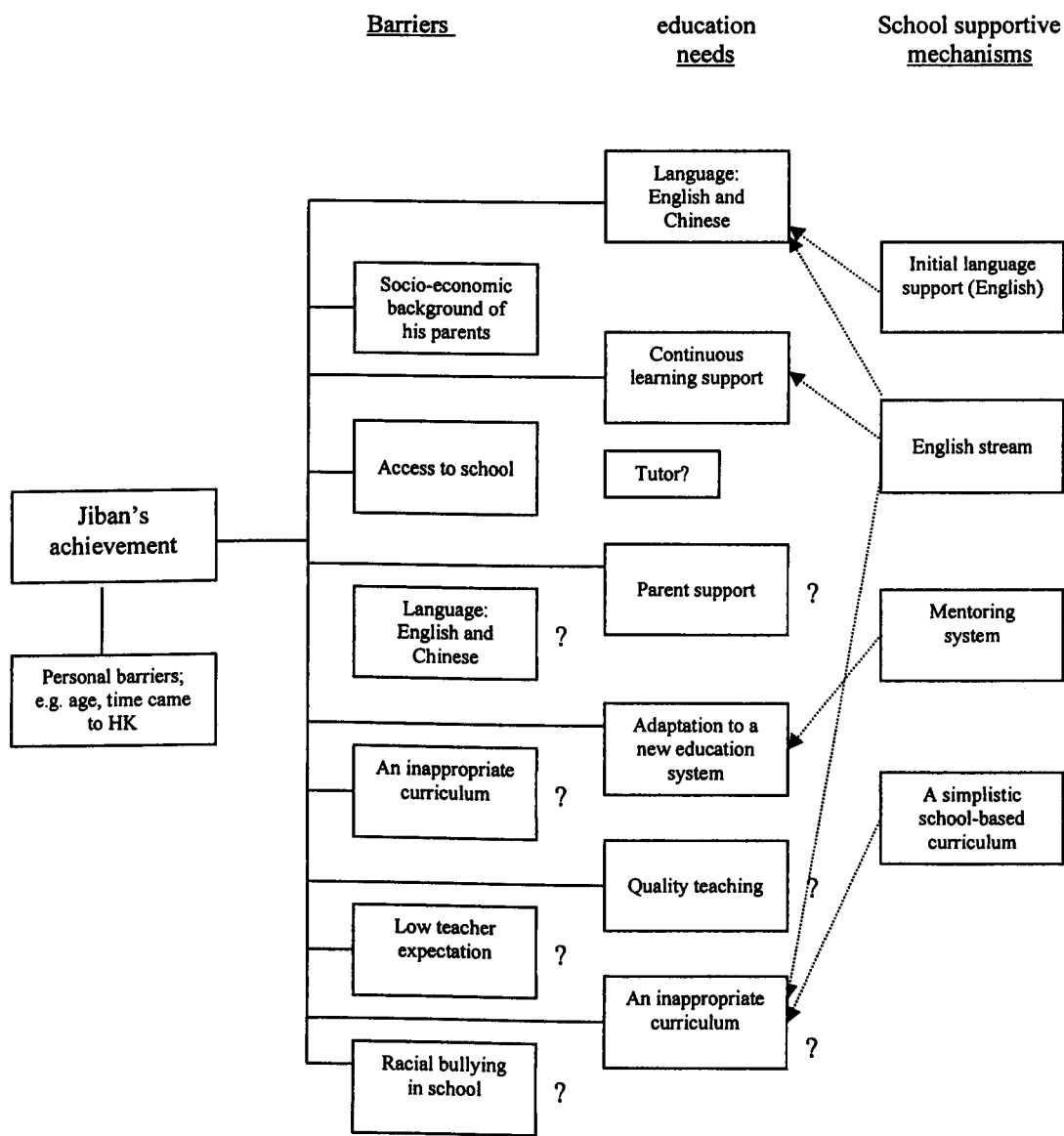
Initially the school's teaching assistant gave him some withdrawal tutorial in English for one or two lessons a day, for two weeks. In class they seated him next to Gurung who was a Nepalese and had been in the school for six months. Gurung sometimes played with him during recess and lunch, and introduced him to some friends. Gurung had a tutor who provided answers to the homework for him to copy. Sometimes, his Chinese classmates pushed him and said something which did not seem kind. Even the small ones laughed at him. He was a little afraid of them and tried to avoid them.

The teachers assigned homework to everybody. With great effort, Jiban tried to copy what was given, though he had no idea what it was. The teachers did not get angry when he could not finish his homework. His parents could not help him at home because they did not know how, and they were either working or out looking for work. His father could speak some English and a little Chinese but he could not read. They could not afford to employ a tutor for Jiban. They did not go to the teachers to ask for support for Jiban in case they might think that Jiban was trouble and tell him to go away.

After one month, Jiban began to understand a little English but the other lessons remained foreign to him. There was a test on English, Chinese and Mathematics. Jiban wrote numbers in the blanks in the Mathematics paper hoping he would be lucky and get a few marks. He got 6 marks in English, 2 in Mathematics and 4 in Chinese. His parents were not angry with him but they were disappointed. They told him he should work harder. He should not be breaking his back in the construction site when he grew up. He should get a decent job. Jiban did not want them to be sad, but he did not know what to do.

On the next page is a diagrammatic representation of Jiban's barriers to achievement and education needs, as well as the school's supportive mechanisms available to him.

Diagrammatic representation of Jiban’s barriers to achievement and education needs



The above diagram shows that Jiban’s barriers and education needs are complex. Many of his barriers remain and his needs are not attended to. He has already secured a school place, although the quality of education in the school is unsure. He needs to adapt to the new school system, but the informal mentoring of a classmate and the initial language support seem to be insufficient for the purpose. There are also some cases of racial bullying that makes him feel unwelcome, and probably affect his adaptation and safety.

His achievement depends on the quality of the school's teaching and curriculum, but the teachers make no effort to help him and they seem to have low expectations. Even though the curriculum is simple and easy, he cannot access it because there is no scaffolding to help him. His parents cannot help him because they are not educated and they do not know how. The school creates an English stream and considers this adequate. Jiban is expected to fit in and look after his own problems. To achieve, he needs to learn English and Chinese, but he is left to pick these up from the environment, which may take a time longer than he can afford. By then, the simple and easy curriculum would have created a huge gap between what he has achieved and what the average pupils have achieved.

As illustrated in Jiban's case, it looks like the school's supportive mechanisms are minimal, not very effective, and cannot sufficiently cater for his various needs, even though some of the barriers are created in the school environment. The creation of an English stream seems to cater for a number of Jiban's education needs, but do they? Under the circumstance, what chances of success does he have?

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Appendix One: Research Instruments

A. Pupils Interview Schedule

Introduction by interviewer

1. Self-introduction.
2. What are your names? Which classes are you in?
3. I am interested in learning about how Nepalese students are getting on in your school.

Identity

1. How long have you been studying in this school? Do you like it? Tell me about your school? (prompts: local Chinese students, other ethnic groups, general school climate)
2. Tell me something about you.
3. Were you born in HK? Have you visited Nepal?
4. What languages do you speak? (prompts: home, school, friends)
5. Who teaches you the languages?
6. How do you describe yourself? (prompts: quiet, naughty, hardworking, like activities)
7. What do you think about studying in a Chinese school?

Expectations

1. Where do you plan to go after leaving this school? (prompts: secondary school, another primary school) Why?

Achievement and learning support

1. How are you doing at school? (prompts: good, average?)
2. Which are you favourite subjects?
3. What do you find most difficult?
4. Which teachers do you like? Why?
5. How do the teachers help you to understand the lesson? Do they use English?
6. How do the teachers help you? Do you go to after school classes?
7. Are they useful?
8. Did you go to kindergarten or other classes before you come to this school?
9. Who helps you with your study at home?
10. What do you think about learning Chinese? Is it difficult?
11. Do you think it's important to learn Chinese? Why?

Curriculum/Curriculum visibility

1. Do you learn about people, who are of different nationalities in your school?
2. Do you learn about Nepal in your school?

Policy visibility/Support mechanisms

1. If you have problems at school or other children are not nice to you? Who do you go to?

Peer Group factors

1. Who are your friends in this school? (prompts: Nepalese, children of other nationalities)

Any other issues

1. Are there any other things about you or the school that you want to tell me about?

- end -

B. Parents' Interview Schedule

Introduction by interviewer

1. Self-introduction.
2. I am trying to find out more about the educational experiences and needs of Nepalese students, so we can support their learning better. Anything you say will be treated as confidential and written anonymously.
3. Ask parents to introduce themselves and talk a little about themselves. (prompts: work, household structure, languages spoken, reasons for coming to HK, work or study of elder brothers and sisters)
4. Were your children born in HK?

Identity

1. Do you like Hong Kong? Do you plan to stay here?
2. How do people treat you and your children because you're Nepalese? (prompts: in general, at school) Do you have any experience of discrimination?
3. Are there any classes that your children go to in order to learn their mother tongue?

Expectations

1. Why did you choose this school for your children? (prompt: secondary school preparation, learn Chinese, location)
2. Are school fees a problem to you if you have to pay?
3. What do you think of the school?
4. Is it important for your child to learn English and Chinese? Why?

Achievement and support

1. How do you think your children is achieving at school?
2. Which secondary school do you plan for your children to go to?
3. What are the difficulties that your children have at school? (prompts: language)
4. What is their major difficulty? (prompt: whether still a problem)
5. How does the school help your children? (prompt: extra classes)
6. Do you think this is useful?
7. What help do you think your children need?
8. How can the school help your children better?

Parental involvement with study

1. How do you help your children with their lesson? (prompts: help with homework, private tuition)

Parental links with school

1. Are you a member of the Parent-teacher Association? (prompt: role, involvement)
2. How does the school tell you about how your children are doing?
3. Do you usually go to school functions? (prompts: open days, parent evenings, sports days, helpers)
4. Do your children tell you about things that happen at school? (prompts: learning, peer relationships)

Policy visibility

1. Does the school have naughty children? What does the school do about it? Do children say bad words?

Any other issues

1. Is there anything else about your children's schooling that you would like to talk about?

- end -

C. Headteacher/Teachers' interview schedule

Introduction by interviewer

1. Introduction.
2. Explain purpose of study. (The purpose of the study is to find out how well Nepalese pupils are performing in the Hong Kong public school system, their needs, and practices the school employs to help them.)
3. Establish headteacher/teacher's role and length of time at school. Teaching experience, subjects taught, and previous experience.
4. How did the school start accepting minority ethnic pupils? (prompts: decision-making, School Management Committee) (*Head's question*)

Achievement, administrative and support system

1. What (administrative) strategies does the school use to facilitate the intake of ethnic minority pupils? (prompts: groupings, teacher deployment, curriculum, extra classes, liaison with non-government organizations) Is attendance to these extra classes voluntary? (prompt: attendance rate, acceptance by parents and pupils) (*Head's question*)
2. Are there any special mentoring arrangements in place for minority ethnic pupils? (prompt: buddy system) (*Head's question*)
3. How did you come up with these strategies? (prompts: different strategies attempted, trial and error, effectiveness) (*Head's question*)
4. Which strategies do you find more effective?
5. How do the teachers help the ethnic minority pupils in their teaching? Is there a school policy? (prompts: bilingual teaching, less homework)
6. How do you help Nepalese pupils when they first come to this school? (prompts: primary one, in the middle of the term, pupils with some/no English or Chinese) (*Head's question*)
7. What is the level of Chinese of these minority pupils?
8. What do you consider to be the main barriers to achievement, if any, facing Nepalese pupils? (prompts: language, different to barriers of other pupil groups)
9. Would you consider language to be the pupils' biggest barrier to achievement?
10. Would it be correct to say that most of the pupils' learning difficulties are solved if they learn through English or that the school has an English stream?
11. Can the Nepalese pupils learn side by side with the local pupils without needing extra help? Is this possible?
12. In your opinion, how are Nepalese pupils performing in this school compared

- to other groups of pupils? (prompt: whether data guided)
13. What is the role of the (Nepalese) teacher assistant in the school? (prompts: classroom support, translator for teachers, communication with parents)

Monitoring (*Head's questions*)

1. How is the school monitoring the progress and achievement of different ethnic groups? (prompts: distinct category, specific targets, tests and exams)
2. Do the pupils participate in the Territory-wide System Assessment? (note: territory -wide assessment of pupils in primary 3 and 6)
3. Does the attendance of Nepalese pupils differ from the pupils of other ethnic groups and the local children? Does the school monitor attendance by ethnicity?
4. Is casual absence a problem? Are there any measures in place to reduce casual absence?

Curriculum

1. Do minority ethnic pupils study a curriculum different to the mainstream curriculum? (*Head's question*)
2. What is the language of instruction and the curriculum?
3. What is the language of instruction when the pupils return to the big classes? (when there are split classes for certain subjects)
4. Do the pupils learn Chinese? If so, what is the medium of instruction?
5. Are minority ethnic culture and identities evident in the curriculum and school activities? (prompts: theme days, projects, displays)
6. Does the school offer language classes in the pupils' mother tongue? (prompts: languages offered in the curriculum) (*Head's question*)

Expectations

1. Why do the parents put their children in this school?
2. What sort of expectations do the parents of Nepalese pupils in this school have of their children?
3. What do the students think about studying in a Chinese school?
4. What are the perceptions of the behavior of different ethnic pupils by other teachers?
5. What is the socio-economic background of the Nepalese pupils? Do you think their socio-economic background affects their achievement?

School culture

1. What do the/other teachers think about having minority ethnic pupils in the school? (prompts: extra work, language demand)
2. How do the pupils of different ethnic groups get along?

Parental links

1. Do you discuss with the parents of Nepalese pupils about their children's achievement? (*Teacher's question*)
2. Have you ever suggested to parents of Nepalese pupils how they could help their children with their revision at home?
3. How does the school communicate with the Nepalese parents? (prompt: language of circulars, newsletters, translator/teacher assistant) (*Head's question*)
4. Do Nepalese parents support/turn up at school activities? (prompt: PTA executive members)

Peer group sub-cultures

1. Do the local pupils and minority ethnic pupils play together? (prompts: mixing, separate groups)
2. How do you think the Nepalese pupils are treated in the school? (prompt: other pupils)

Community factors

1. How is the presence of ethnic minority pupils viewed by the parents of the mainstream pupils?
2. How are the interracial friendships and Nepalese pupils viewed by the community/parents?
3. Is there any evidence of racial/cultural tension within the community?

Policy, school leadership and support from the Education and Manpower Bureau

1. Does the school have a race equality policy? (*Head's question*)
2. What does the Education and Manpower Bureau do to support the schools with regards to meeting the educational needs of minority ethnic pupils? (prompts: training for teachers, liaison of schools, sharing of best practices, curriculum support)
3. Are there any areas of knowledge, competencies and resources that you perceive as essential but feel that you don't have regarding the teaching of minority ethnic pupils in this school? (prompts: funding, manpower)

4. How would you describe the headteacher's leadership style?

Any other issues

1. Is there anything else you would like to mention in relation to Nepalese pupils' achievement in the school? (prompt: policy recommendations to the EMB; type of support needed)

- end -

Appendix Two: Profile of respondents

A. Profile of pupils

<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Time in Hong Kong</u>	<u>Place of birth</u>
8	Girl	1 year	Nepal
8	Boy	3 years	Hong Kong
8	Girl	7 months	Hong Kong
9	Girl	1 year	Hong Kong
9	Boy	7 months	Nepal
9	Girl	7 months	Hong Kong
10	Boy	3 years	Hong Kong
10	Boy	3 year	Nepal
10	Girl	7 months	Nepal
10	Girl	3 years	Nepal
11	Girl	8 years	Nepal
11	Girl	4 years	Nepal
11	Girl	1 year	Nepal
12	Boy	1 year	Nepal
12	Boy	10 months	Nepal
12	Boy	2 years	Nepal
13	Boy	Come and go	Nepal
14	Girl	10 months	Nepal
14	Boy	7 years	Hong Kong

B. Profile of the parents/guardian

<u>Parent/Guardian</u>	<u>Children's place of birth/ No. of children</u>	<u>Language(s) spoken (Self reported)</u>	<u>Occupation and employment situation</u>	<u>Plan to stay in Hong Kong</u>
Mother (single mother)	Hong Kong/2	Nepali, Some English	Unemployed	Yes
Mother	Hong Kong/1	Nepali, Some English	Waitress	Yes
Mother	1 born in HK/1 in Nepal	Nepali, Very little English	Does not work; (Husband works in construction, unemployed)	Yes
Mother (with kidney disease)	Nepal/2	Nepali, very little English	Husband always unemployed	Yes
Mother	Hong Kong/2	Nepali, Hindi, Some English	Husband works in construction (part time)	Yes
Sister	Nepal/1	Nepali, Hindi, Some English, Some Chinese	Salon worker	Yes
Father	2 born in HK; 3 in Nepal	Nepali, Little Chinese; Little English	Works in Construction	Yes, ... maybe
Father	Nepal/2	Nepali, Hindi, English, Little Chinese	Works in coffee shop	Yes, ... not decided

Father	Hong Kong/1	Nepali, Hindi, English, Some Chinese	Labourer	Yes, ... don't know
Father	Hong Kong/2	Nepali, English	Welder (works in construction, unemployed)	Yes
Father	Nepal/2	Nepali, Little English	Construction (unemployed)	Yes
Father	Hong Kong/2	Nepali, Hindi, English	Construction (unemployed)	Yes

C. Profile of headteachers and teachers*

<u>Position</u>	<u>Number (School A)</u>	<u>Number (School B)</u>
Headteachers	1	1
Senior teachers	3	3
Teachers	1	1
Teaching assistants	1 (Nepalese) 1 (Pakistani)	1

*Note: Headteachers and teachers are Chinese except specified.